

IT SHOULDN'T HURT: CREATING POLICIES AND PLACES FOR INJURY-FREE ACTIVE LIVING FOR CHILDREN

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Background Being active is essential to the health and well-being of children and is often promoted to address obesity, but physical activity can also lead to injuries. Effective injury prevention programmes must accompany efforts to increase physical activity among youth, so that the health benefits from active living are not outweighed by a significant increase in injuries.

Objective Describe the evidence base concerning unintentional injuries associated with popular physical activities, and discuss how injury prevention and obesity prevention professionals can work together to prevent injuries while promoting active lifestyles.

Methods Review of the scientific literature related to reducing injuries during leading physical activities for youth (walking, bicycling, swimming, sports and recreation, and play on playgrounds), and effective place-based policies and design principles that can prevent injuries while promoting active lifestyles for children.

Results Since injury prevention and active living share a focus on making physical places appealing and safe for children to be active, effective place-focused interventions can be implemented. Along with these changes, interventions that encourage behavioural adaptation are also needed. Sweden's comprehensive efforts to change the environment and implement policies to reduce its child injury death rate provide a good case study of how injury prevention efforts may also increase opportunities for safe physical activity.

Significance Efforts to increase youth physical activity should occur in partnership with injury prevention professionals, who can reach out to those working in chronic disease prevention, and vice versa. These collaborations help promote optimal child health and low risk for injury.