

STUDY SHOWS CHIEF CAUSE OF INJURY ARE HEELIES AND TRAMPOLINES

A SIGNIFICANT number of children are presenting at two Dublin children's hospitals seeking treatment for injuries sustained as a result of using heeled shoes, roller skates, bouncy castles and trampolines, a new study has found.

Doctors at Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Crumlin and the National Children's Hospital in Tallaght made the finding after looking at all attendances over a four-month period at their paediatric orthopaedic outpatient departments.

They found sports and recreational injuries accounted for 55 per cent of the 1,791 attendances between May and August 2006. Recreational injuries accounted for 28 per cent of the attendances, with the use of heeled shoes (shoes with wheels on them) accounting for 11 per cent of these alone. Most of the remaining injuries were sustained in falls and road crashes.

In all, some 120 children presented with injuries as a result of using trampolines over the study period, 56 presented with injuries from using rollerblades or roller skates, 56 were injured while using heeled shoes, 34 while using bouncy castles and 24 were injured using scooters. In terms of sports injuries, 152 sustained injuries as a result of playing Gaelic games, 138 while playing soccer and 82 while playing rugby.

Overall a total of 827 of the 1,791 children who presented required plaster casts. Wrist and hand injuries were the most common.

The study is published in the latest edition of the *Irish Medical Journal* (IMJ). Dr Pat O'Toole, a specialist registrar in orthopaedic surgery and one of the study's authors, said his advice to parents and their children is to use protective gear when it is available as an attempt to avoid injuries.

For example, he said wrist injuries were the main ones sustained by children on heeled shoes and therefore they should wear wrist protectors.

He said trampolines should always have a protective net, their bars should be padded and children using them should be supervised.

Many of the injuries sustained while using bouncy castles, he said, were sustained as children jumped out of the castles onto the ground so a protective net at the exit would prevent this.

The study, as published in the IMJ, states that at this time of reconfiguration of paediatric services in Dublin a knowledge of the number and type of injuries attending paediatric orthopaedic outpatient departments is essential "in the future planning of any new paediatric hospital and also for the future development of established units".

The Health Service Executive (HSE) announced plans in 2006 to merge the three existing children's hospitals in Dublin - at Crumlin, Temple Street and Tallaght - into one new national children's hospital on the site of the Mater Hospital.

Amid opposition to the plans by staff in Crumlin and Tallaght hospitals it was revealed the new hospital would be backed up by urgent care centres in Tallaght, Blanchardstown and possibly Loughlinstown.

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