

24. Injury Hospitalization

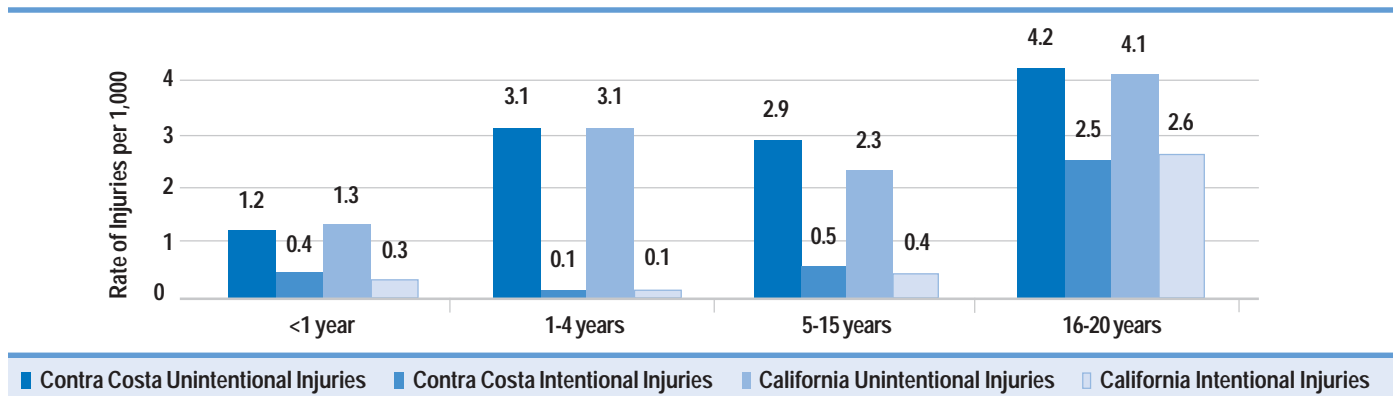
What It Is

The injury hospitalization rate measures the number of discharges from acute care hospital facilities for intentional and unintentional injuries. The measure is expressed as a rate per 1,000 children in the population ages 0 to 20. Intentional injuries include child battering, assaults with firearms, knives, or other objects, and self-inflicted injuries. Unintentional injuries include accidents caused by motor vehicles, falls, fires, suffocation, drowning, and poisoning.

Why It Is Important

Injuries are not tracked systematically unless they result in hospitalization or death. Thus, these hospital data only represent the most serious injuries among children. Intentional injuries require intervention by the police or child welfare to protect the child and prevent recurrence. Unintentional injuries, or accidents, are more common, and are generally preventable. Parent education on the importance of child-proofing the home, appropriate use of car seats and booster seats, seat belts, and helmets, fencing pools and yards, and safe storage of firearms can reduce the likelihood of accidents. Education and enforcement regarding safe driving practices for teenagers are also important in reducing motor vehicle injuries, a leading cause of injury among older children and teens.

Figure 24.1 — Contra Costa County Fatal and Nonfatal Injury Hospitalization Rate by Age, 2000



Source: California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, Patient Discharge Data, December 4, 2002; Department of Finance, 1970-2040 Population Projections by Age, Sex, and Race/Ethnic Detail, December 1998, 2003.

How We Are Doing

The unintentional injury hospitalization rates in Contra Costa are higher than the statewide rates for age groups 5 to 15 and 16 to 20. The unintentional injury rate has increased since 1996 for all age groups except infants. For children ages 0 to 4, accidents that require hospitalization are usually due to falls, poisoning, cars, fires/burns, being struck by objects, and drowning/submersion.

The intentional injury rates have increased for children under one year old and those aged 5 to 15, although intentional injury rates are lower in Contra Costa County than statewide for all age groups except ages 5 to 15. The hospitalization rates in Contra Costa County for intentional and unintentional injuries were much higher for young adults ages 16 to 20 than for any other age group. The greatest proportion of intentional injuries, (43.6%), were due to self-harm or suicide, followed by firearm related assaults and homicides (26.4%) and other assaults (22.8%).

Data Development

More information is needed to understand the causes and conditions that lead to youth self-harm, suicide,

Table 24.1 — Intentional Fatal and Nonfatal Injury Hospitalizations Among Contra Costa County Young Adults Ages 16 to 20 By Type, 2000

| Type of Intentional Injury | Number in 2000 | % of Intentional Injuries |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Self Harm/Suicide | 61 | 43.6% |
| Assaults/Homicide: Firearms | 37 | 26.4% |
| Assaults/Homicide: Cut/Pierce | 10 | 7.1% |
| Assaults/Homicide: Other | 32 | 22.9% |
| Total Intentional Injuries | 140 | 100% |
| Total Injury Hospitalizations | 426 | - |
| Percent Intentional | - | 32.9% |

Source: California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, Patient Discharge Data, December 4, 2003.

and suicide attempts. Easier access to means of suicide, the pressures of life, and social isolation are thought to contribute to increased suicide rates (American Academy of Pediatrics). Please refer to the Data Development Agenda section of this report for more information.