

Equestrian Helmet Fact Sheet

1. Over 33,000 people in BC ride horses. Athletes involved in horse riding are more likely to suffer head trauma than those involved in football, boxing or soccer.
2. Head injuries are the most common reason for admission to hospital or even death among riders. Most injuries occur during pleasure riding.
3. A fall from 2 feet (60 cm) can cause permanent brain damage. A horse elevates a rider 8 feet (3 meters) or more above ground.
4. A human skull can be shattered by an impact of 7-10 kph. Horses can gallop at 65 kph. Children's skulls are the most vulnerable.
5. Ten to fourteen year olds are the children most likely to be involved in an accident with a horse, however all ages are at risk.
6. A rider who has had one head injury has a 40% chance of suffering a second head injury. Children, teens and young adults are most vulnerable to sudden death from a second impact syndrome; severe brain swelling as a result of suffering a second head injury before recovery from the first head injuries.
7. Death is not the only serious outcome of unprotected head injuries. Those who survive with brain injury may suffer epilepsy, intellectual and memory impairment, and personality changes.
8. Hospital costs for an acute head injury can be in the range of \$2000 per day. Lifetime extended care costs may easily exceed \$3 million. There is no funding for rehabilitation outside the medical setting.
9. Helmets work. Most deaths from head injury can be prevented by wearing ASTM (American Society for Testing Materials), SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) approved helmets that fit correctly and have the chin strap firmly applied. Other types of helmets including bike helmets, are inadequate.
10. Racing organizations require helmets and as a result jockey now suffer less head injuries than pleasure riders. The US Pony Club lowered their head injury rate 29% with mandatory helmet use. Britain's hospital admission rate for equestrians fell 46% after helmet design improved and they became routine in use.
11. The BCMA (BC Medical Association), CMA (Canadian Medical Association), AMEA (American Medical Equestrian Association) and the AMA (American Medical Association) recommend approved helmets be worn on all rides by all equestrians.

Courtesy of the BC Medical Association.