

Heely shoe users: Take heed of risks

A new type of shoe with a hidden wheel can lead to spills and trips to the emergency department if children do not follow safety warnings.

Known as Heelys, the shoes are popular among pre-adolescents. Experts are warning that injuries can result when children do not wear protective gear when using the shoes in wheeled mode.

Because most children wear the shoes when out walking in the mall or in the public, they often do not wear protective gear, according to Gary Smith, M.D., FAAP, member of the AAP Committee on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention.

A recent study in the journal *Injury* found that 95% of parents whose children were injured while using Heelys did not know that protective gear should be worn on the head, knees, wrists and elbows.

Most injuries occurred on the street, but some children were injured in the home and on the playground.

Common injuries were upper and lower limb fractures, and one child in the study sustained a significant head injury. Some children also suffered strains and sprains. None of the injured children in the study wore protective gear, and two-thirds were under parental supervision at the time of the injury.

In addition to protective gear, parents are encouraged to ensure that children follow guidance offered by the shoe manufacturer when using the shoes in wheeled mode:

- Always stagger feet with the strong foot in front – putting them side by side can cause loss of balance.
- When walking with the wheels in, do not lean back on the heels. Be sure to walk with toes touching the ground first.
- Be extra cautious when heeling on uneven surfaces. Debris and curbs can cause sudden stops and uncontrolled movements.
- Never heel faster than you can walk. If you feel you are losing balance, step out of the heeling by putting your toes down and leaning forward.

“Use common sense,” said Dr. Smith, adding that children are bound to fall when doing any wheeled sport on a hard surface. “Injuries can and will occur.”

“The main thing is head protection – wearing a helmet is certainly something we would recommend for use of Rollerblades and roller skates as well.”

-Trisha Koriath
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