

INJURIES

## ARE INJURIES PREVENTABLE?

*“Accidents happen.”*

Yes, accidents happen, and people get injured as a result of them-- but they do so in **predictable** ways.

Do incidents like these sound familiar?

*A 42-year-old swimmer is caught in an ocean riptide and, as a result, drowns.*

*An 18-year-old driver is thrown through the windshield of his vehicle during a collision, resulting in a fatal head injury.*

These things happen again and again.

These are just two examples of the hundreds of recent deaths or serious injuries in British Columbia from events that were not only predictable, but **preventable**.

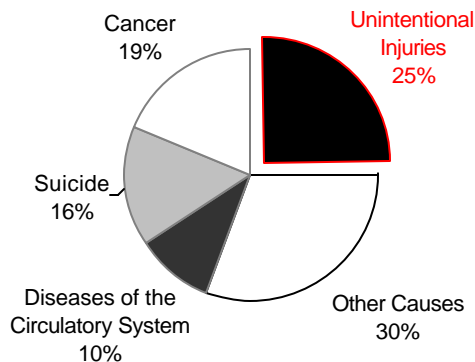
Research indicates that as many as 9 out of 10 unintentional injuries could be prevented.

## HOW SERIOUS A PROBLEM IS THIS?

**Very!** Unintentional injuries are the single most common cause of *deaths* for Canadians between the ages of 1 - 44.

### Causes of Death in Canada<sup>1</sup>

Ages 1 - 44, 1997



### Leading Causes of Deaths due to Unintentional Injuries in Canada<sup>1</sup>

All ages, 1997

Motor vehicle traffic	2,867 deaths
Falls	1,319 deaths
Poisoning	703 deaths
Drowning	380 deaths
Suffocation	379 deaths
Fires and Burns	295 deaths

**About 1,500 British Columbians die from unintentional injuries each year.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Health Canada, 2001  
<sup>2</sup>BC Stats, 1994-98

**Most of these deaths could easily have been prevented!**

see over...

A 14-year-old boy was killed when he tripped over a stop sign and was struck by a pickup truck.

Two boys, 14 and 15 years of age, drowned when they were swept into a fast-flowing stream and over a series of steep waterfalls.

A sixty-three-year-old woman slipped while getting into her bathtub and fractured her hip.

A 12-month-old boy choked to death on a piece of hard candy.

A 14-year-old girl with a history of health-related problems suffocated following a seizure.

A six-year-old boy died in an apartment fire caused by a sibling playing with matches. The smoke detector in the apartment had no batteries.

An adult hit, struck his head and died while climbing his daughter's bed to ride a scooter.

A 10-year-old boy was killed on a wilderness hike.

## CAN WE ELIMINATE ALL INJURIES?

Probably not. We can't live our lives in a protective bubble...

...and some minor injuries such as scrapes and bruises are a part of playing and learning. More serious injuries, however, need our attention and work to prevent them.



## SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

We can learn to take **safe risks**:

- **Use proper safety equipment** (proper helmets for sports or work, seatbelts for drivers, etc.)
- **Educate ourselves** (ocean safety for swimmers, poison prevention measures, etc.)
- **Connect with injury prevention groups in your community** (local health units, fire departments, schools, etc.)

Taking safe risks means taking responsibility for the consequences of our actions. It means stopping accidents before they "happen".

*If the swimmer caught in the riptide had known to swim sideways to the current, she might be safely swimming in the ocean today.*

*If the driver had been wearing a seatbelt there's a good chance that he too, would still be alive.*

For further information on how you can prevent injuries contact your local health unit office or the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.



The British Columbia Injury Research and Prevention Unit (BCIRPU) is committed to meeting the challenge of making BC a safe place to live and work by coordinating efforts that will prevent or reduce injuries, their consequences, and costs.

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A young boy was riding down the road in a toy car when he was struck by a car. He was wearing a seat belt and was not injured.

Two 16-year-olds were killed when the vehicle they were riding in ran a stop sign. The driver was not wearing a seat belt and was thrown from the car. Neither of the boys was wearing a seat belt.

An 18-month-old girl died of a drug overdose. She is thought to have found some prescription pills while visiting her grandmother.

A 47-year-old construction worker slipped and fell while framing a window, fracturing his skull and collarbone.

A 16-year-old boy was struck out and crushed by a truck.

