

### Kidsafe WA

Kidsafe WA is the leading independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting safety and preventing childhood injuries and accidents in Western Australia. Injuries are the leading cause of death among Australian children aged zero to fourteen, accounting for nearly half of all deaths in this age group. More children die of injury than of cancer, asthma and infectious diseases combined. Many of these deaths and injuries can be prevented. Kidsafe WA works to educate and inform parents and children on staying safe at home, at play and on the road.

### Perth Children's Hospital Injury Surveillance System

Perth Children's Hospital (PCH), previously known as Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, is the only paediatric hospital in Western Australia and is the referral centre for paediatric illness and injury within the state. Each year approximately 60,000 children present to the PCH Emergency Department (ED). The PCH ED Injury Surveillance System is designed to capture data related to all children who present with an injury. This bulletin provides a summary of injuries occurring during the Christmas period between 2014 and 2019 in children under 16 years of age. For the purpose of this bulletin, the Christmas period is defined as the months of December and January.

## Christmas Holiday Injuries

### A snapshot of Christmas holiday injuries

- Between July 2014 and June 2019, there were a total of **14,506** injury presentations to PCH ED during the Christmas period.
- Children between **0 and 4 years** of age represent the majority (42.8%, n=6,206) of injury presentations over this period.
- **Males** represent the greatest number of injuries during the Christmas period, accounting for 56.6% (n=8,210) of injury presentations.
- Almost all injuries (97.9%, n=14,207) during this period were due to **unintentional** circumstances.
- **Falls** are the most common cause of injury over the Christmas period, accounting for 36.5 percent (n=5,288) of injuries.
- The **home** was the most common injury location (18.4%, n=2,669), with **outdoor areas** being the most common area for injury within the home (20.1%, n=536).
- **Sports injuries** account for 17.9 percent (n=2,602) of total injury presentations during the Christmas period.



Partner:



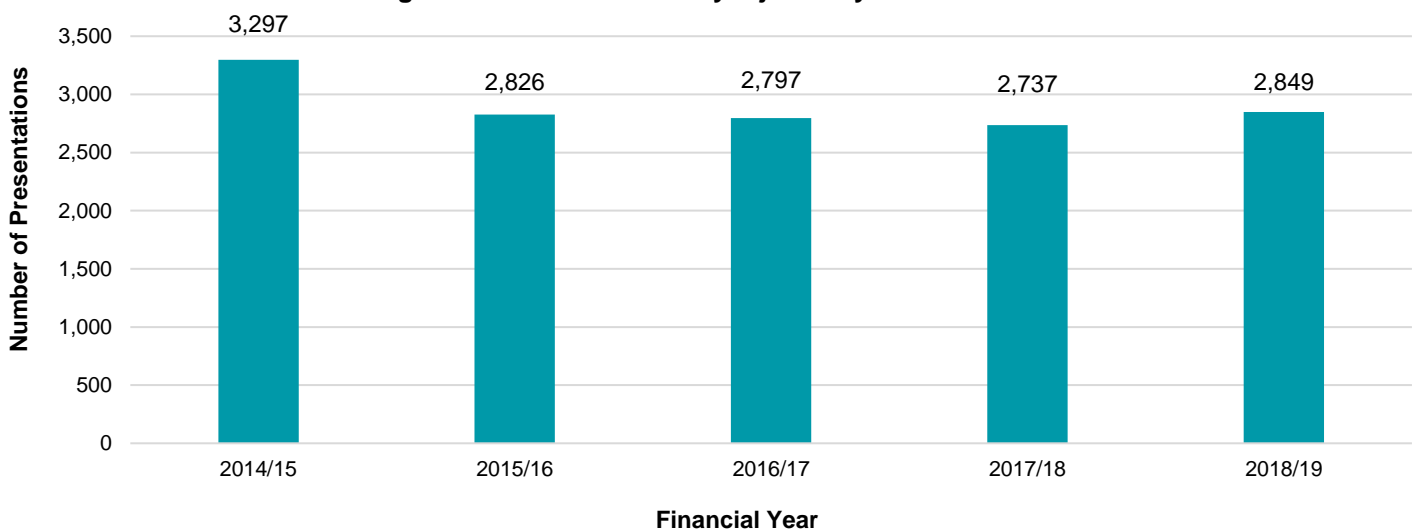
Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

## Introduction

Christmas is a time of celebration, fun and excitement for both children and adults. During these summer months most children are on school holidays, and are therefore more likely to spend time around the home or participating in outdoor activities. Christmas gifts may also put children at increased risk of injury, for example falls from trampolines, bicycles, and scooters or choking on a small toy.

Between July 2014 and June 2019, there were 14,506 Christmas injury presentations to PCH ED, accounting for 15.7 percent of all injury presentations during the five year period. This proportion is slightly lower than the monthly average of 8.3 percent. Figure 1 shows the total injury presentations to PCH ED over Christmas periods. A gradual decrease is seen over time when looking at Christmas injuries as a proportion of total injury presentations to the ED, from 16.6 percent in 2014/15 to 15.2 percent in 2018/19.

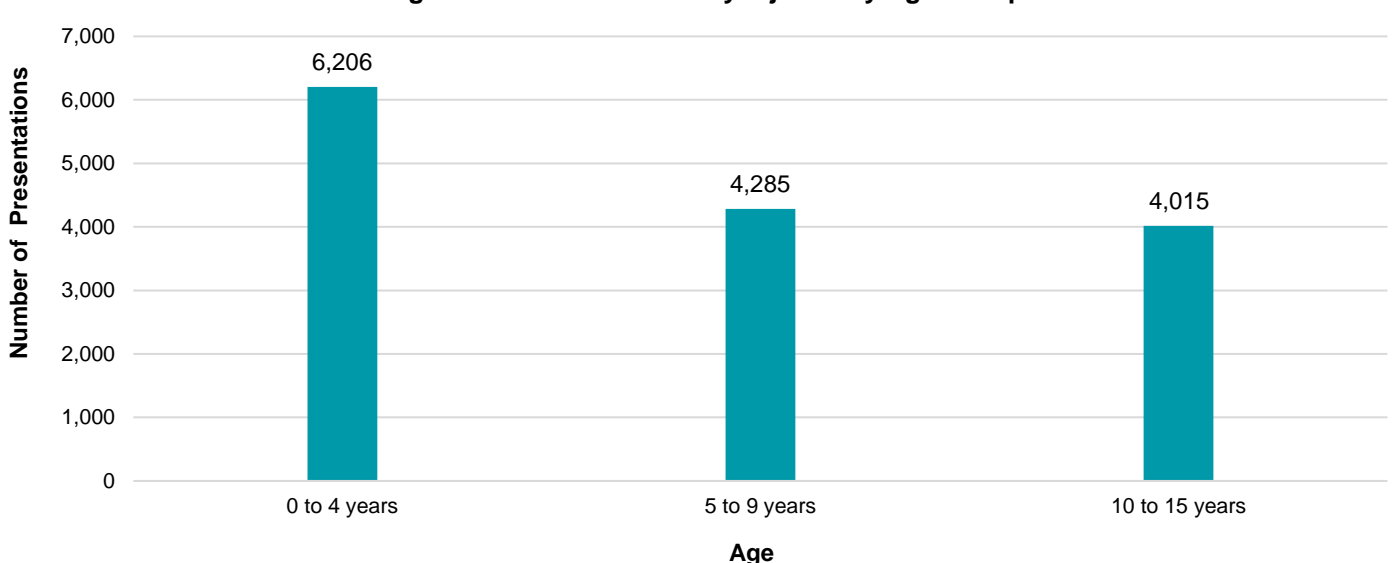
**Figure 1: Christmas Holiday Injuries by Financial Year**



## Demographics

Males record higher rates of injury presentations over the Christmas period accounting for 56.6 percent (n=8,210) while females represented 43.4 percent (n=6,296), which is in line with general injury trends. Injury prevalence was highest among children between the ages of zero and four (42.8%, n=6,206) and presentations decreased with age (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Christmas Holiday Injuries by Age Group**

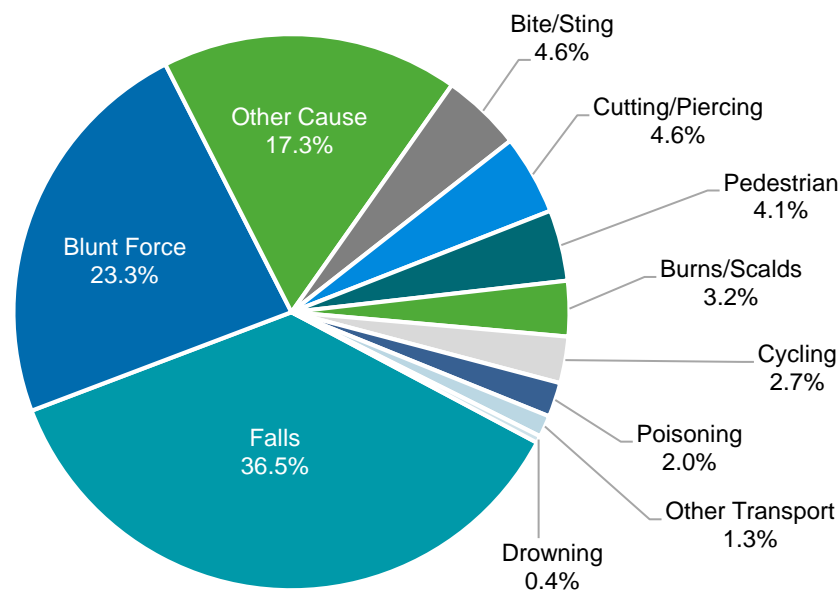


## Injury

Every child that attends PCH ED is allocated a triage category between one and five based on the urgency of the medical attention required, with one being the most urgent and five being least urgent. The most commonly allocated triage category for injuries during the Christmas period was semi-urgent (78.0%, n=11,314), followed by urgent (17.2%, n=2,501). The remaining injuries were classified as either resus (0.5%, n=80), emergency (3.5%, n=518) or non-urgent (0.6%, n=93).

The majority of injuries to children over the Christmas period were unintentional (97.9%, n=14,207). The remaining injuries were classified as intentional (1.3%, n=186), alleged assault (0.5%, n=69) or undetermined (0.3%, n=41). The most common cause of injury during the Christmas period is falls, accounting for 36.5 percent (n=5,288) of injuries (Figure 3). This is followed by blunt force which accounts for almost a quarter of injuries (23.3%, n=3,376).

**Figure 3: Christmas Holiday Injuries by Cause**

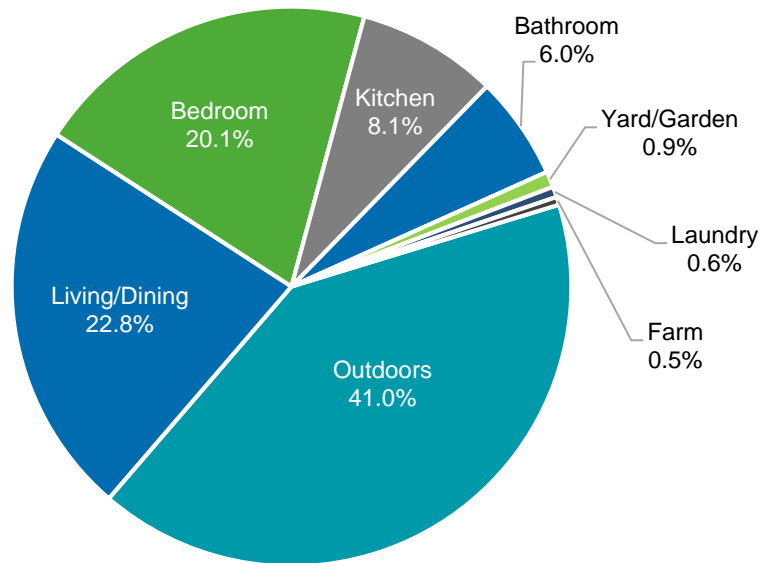


Injuries relating to sport activities accounted for 17.9 percent (n=2,602) of all Christmas injuries. The most common types of sport related injuries were associated with trampolines (20.8%, n=542), cycling (15.1%, n=392), scootering (11.2%, n=291) and skateboarding (6.7%, n=173).

For the majority of injuries, location was unknown (65.6%, n=9,515). Of the known locations, the home was the most common injury location (18.4%, n=2,669). This is followed by school/residential areas (4.6%, n=669), recreational/cultural areas (4.7%, n=591) and open nature areas (2.3%, n=341).

Half of all injuries that occur in the home did not have a specified location (51.1%, n=1,363). With the unspecified data removed, the outdoors (41.0%, n=536) was the most common home location for injuries to occur. This is followed by the living and dining areas (22.8%, n=298) and the bedroom (20.1%, n=262) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Christmas Holiday Injuries by Home Location**



The majority of children left PCH ED with treatment complete (82.7%, n=11,996) and a number of children were admitted to hospital (16.2%, n=2,355). The remainder were either referred to another department or hospital or did not wait for treatment (1.1%, n=155).

## Prevention

The Christmas holiday period is an exciting but potentially risky time for children. During this time they are more likely to spend time around the home or playing outdoors with new toys. Changes in routine for both parents and children can often lead to a lapse in concentration or inattentive supervision. This can lead to confusion on which adult is responsible for supervising, leading to an increased risk of injury. There are a number of simple steps that can be taken to decrease the risk of injuries over the Christmas period:

- Actively supervise children during gatherings and ensure everyone knows who is responsible for the supervision of children.
- When children receive presents, put aside some time to teach children how to use new toys and ensure they know the relevant rules.
- Ensure gifts are appropriate for the child's age and stage of development.
- When gifting equipment such as bicycles or other small-wheeled devices, ensure you choose the appropriate size for the child and that safety equipment is also provided.
- Ensure that play equipment around the home such as trampolines comply with the Australian Standards and are suitable for the child's age and developmental stage.
- Regularly check equipment for signs of damage or wear and repair or replace any faults.
- Be aware of button batteries in novelty items or decorations around Christmas time and ensure children do not have access to these. The battery casing is often not secure, and if batteries are ingested life-threatening burns can occur within hours.

### Suggested citation:

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*The Kidsafe WA Childhood Injury Bulletins are produced by Kidsafe WA in consultation with the Perth Children's Hospital Emergency Department and WA Department of Health.*

**For further information please contact Kidsafe WA**