

# First national study of diving-related injuries

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If it's at the Olympic Games or at the neighborhood pool, diving is one of the fastest growing sports in this country. Every day millions of people do it and every four years during the Olympics, billions of people watch it. So it might surprise you that researchers are just now delving into the dangers of diving boards.

Chelsea Davis will tell you that competing at the highest levels of diving takes persistence. Day after day, dive after dive. No matter how hard she works to get it right even an experienced diver like Chelsea knows how quickly it can all go wrong. At the World Championships in 2005, Chelsea hit her head on the diving board and landed in the glare of the media.

"My nose was broken in about ten place, and I fractured my cheek bone and I sprained my neck," says Chelsea.

It was one terrifying example of something that happens every day, more often than many of us might think.

"Every year in this country, approximately 6,500 children are treated in emergency departments for diving related injury," says Gary Smith, MD at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

On average that's an injury an hour in the U.S., every hour of every day that most pools are open. According to a study just published in the journal Pediatrics, kids between the ages of 10 and 14 are the most likely to get hurt diving,\* and boys are taken to the hospital twice as

often as girls. Experts say it's not the high risk, high dives that are to blame.

"More than 80% of the dive injuries were from a dive height of less than or equal to one meter. So, that is not the highest dive, that's not a platform dive, this is the lowest dive height available at the pool," says Lara McKenzie, PhD, Nationwide Children' Hospital.

Lara McKenzie is senior author of the study, the first of its kind in the U.S. Surprising, given the popularity of diving. There are now more than 20 thousand competitive divers under the age of 18 in this country\* and millions of others who dive for fun. All of whom, McKenzie says, may want to learn more about the sport to lessen their chances of injury.

Experts say most people are hurt trying to do flips off of diving boards, especially back flips\*. If your child wants to learn how to do them, try to enroll them in a program with a qualified instructor, and be sure they only use a diving board when a life guard is on duty.

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