

National study finds table saw-related injuries have remained consistently high

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Woodworking is a popular hobby, with table saws being owned and used by an estimated 6 million to 10 million people in the United States. Although table saws are associated with more injuries than any other woodworking tool, there have been no previously published national studies of table saw-related injuries. A recent study conducted by the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital found that from 1990-2007, an estimated 565,670 non-occupational table saw-related injuries were treated in US hospital emergency departments, averaging 31,500 injuries per year. Although a 27 percent increase in the number of injuries was found over the 18-year study period, there was no change in the rate of injuries per 10,000 US population.

According to the study, available online as a Publication Ahead-of-Print for the [Journal of Trauma](#), lacerations (66 percent) were the most common type of injury while amputations (10 percent) were the most serious. The majority of injuries (86 percent) were to the fingers or thumb. Males (97 percent) and adults (97 percent) accounted for the majority of table saw-related injuries. In comparison to adults, children were more likely to injure their heads, faces and necks and to be injured at school.

"While the majority of the children who were injured were between the ages of 14 and 17 years, children as young as 6 years were found to be injured while operating a table saw," said study author Brenda Shields, MS, research coordinator at the Center for Injury Research and Policy at

Nationwide Children's Hospital. "More research is needed to determine appropriate age restrictions."

Most of the table saw-related injuries resulted from contact with the blade of the saw. In cases when the mechanism of injury was documented, kickback was the most common mechanism (72 percent), followed by debris being thrown by the saw (10 percent), lifting or moving the saw (6 percent), or getting a glove or clothing caught in the blade (4 percent).

A new technology that could prevent some of these injuries is the SawStop, which can detect contact between a person and a saw blade and then instantly react to stop and retract the blade. "Although this technology could be beneficial in preventing serious injuries, it is currently too expensive for the average home woodworker to afford," said Shields. "We recommend that all table saws be equipped with such technology and be made available at an affordable price."

Other recommendations to prevent table saw-related injuries include keeping table saws in an area that is not accessible to children, protecting the blade with a rigid cover when not in use, reading the owner's manual carefully for safety rules, and completing a table saw-specific safety course before operating the saw.

This is the first published study to describe the epidemiology of non-occupational table saw-related injuries using a nationally representative sample. Data for this study were collected from the National Electronic [Injury](#) Surveillance System (NEISS), which is operated by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The NEISS dataset provides information on consumer product-related and sports and recreation-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments across the country.

Provided by Nationwide Children's Hospital

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