

# Study examines prevalence, characteristics of traumatic brain injuries among adolescents

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"[Traumatic brain injury](#) (TBI) among adolescents has been identified as an important health priority. However, studies of TBI among adolescents in large representative samples are lacking. This information is important to the planning and evaluation of [injury prevention](#) efforts, particularly because even minor TBI may have important adverse consequences," write Gabriela Ilie, Ph.D., of St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, Canada, and colleagues, who examined the prevalence of TBI, mechanisms of injury, and adverse correlates in a large representative sample of adolescents living in Ontario, Canada.

As reported in a Research Letter, data were derived from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's 2011 Ontario student drug use and [health survey](#), consisting of anonymous, self-administered questionnaires completed in classrooms by students grades 7-12 (age range: 11-20 years; n = 8,915). Traumatic brain injury was defined as an acquired head injury in which the student was unconscious for at least 5 minutes or hospitalized overnight.

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of girls and 6.9 percent of boys) and 14.6 percent reported a TBI in their lifetime but not in the past 12 months (12.8 percent of girls and 16.2 percent of boys). [Sports injuries](#) accounted for more than half of the cases in the past 12 months (56 percent) and were more common among males (46.9 percent in girls and 63.3 percent in boys). Students who reported occasional to frequent consumption of alcohol and cannabis in the past 12 months had significantly higher odds of TBI in the past 12 months than abstainers.

"In the United States, more than half a million adolescents aged 15 years or younger require hospital-based care for head injury annually, and our data suggest a much higher number of adolescents may be experiencing these injuries," the authors write. "The magnitude of the prevalence estimates and the associated risks identified within this [representative sample](#) support suggestions to improve understanding, prevention, and response to TBI among adolescents."

**More information:** *JAMA*. 2013;309[24]:2550-2552

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