

# US traffic accidents send 2.5 million to ERs each year, CDC says

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Medical costs of those collisions top \$18 billion, U.S. government estimates.

(HealthDay)—Road crash injuries sent more than 2.5 million Americans to emergency rooms in 2012. And, nearly 200,000 were hospitalized due to motor vehicle collisions, a new federal government report says.

That means about 7,000 people went to the emergency department every day because of [motor vehicle](#) crash injuries in 2012, according to Ileana Arias, principal deputy director for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"Motor vehicle crash injuries occur all too frequently and have health and economic costs for individuals, the health care system, and society. We need to do more to keep people safe and reduce crash injuries and medical costs," Arias said in an agency news release.

The lifetime medical expenses for those crash injuries totaled \$18

billion. That includes \$10 billion for those admitted to hospital and \$8 billion for patients treated in ERs and released, according to the Oct. 7 *Vital Signs* [report](#) by the CDC.

Work lost over a lifetime due to crash-related injuries in 2012 cost about \$33 billion, the report found.

The average lifetime cost of each crash-related ER visit was \$3,300, and \$57,000 for each hospitalization. More than 75 percent of costs occur during the first 18 months after the injury, according to the report.

Teens and young adults—aged 15 to 29—have a much higher risk for road crash injuries and accounted for nearly 1 million of such injuries in 2012 (38 percent). On the other end of the age spectrum, people older than 80 had the highest hospitalization rates. One-third of those over 80 injured in crashes ended up hospitalized, the report noted.

There was some good news in the report. There were nearly 400,000 fewer ER visits and 5,700 fewer hospitalizations for crash-related injuries in 2012 than in 2002, according to the report. That translates to about \$1.7 billion less in lifetime medical costs and \$2.3 billion less in [lifetime](#) lost work costs, the report found.

"Motor vehicle crashes and related injuries are preventable," Gwen Bergen, a behavioral scientist in the division of unintentional injury prevention at the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, said in the CDC news release.

"Although much has been done to help keep people safe on the road, no state has fully implemented all the interventions proven to increase the use of car seats, booster seats, and seat belts; reduce drinking and driving; and improve teen driver safety," she added.

**More information:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [motor vehicle safety](#).

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