

New research shows golf carts causing serious injuries to children

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As golf carts become increasingly popular in communities beyond the fairway, new research shows, a significant number of children are being seriously injured while using them. The study abstract, "Golf Carts and Children: An 11-year Single State Experience," will be presented on Monday, Sept. 18, at the American Academy of Pediatrics 2017 National Conference & Exhibition in Chicago.

Researchers looked at Pennsylvania's state trauma center database and identified 108 patients under age 18 who were treated between January 2004 and December 2014 for injuries they sustained while using a [golf](#) cart. These children averaged 11 years of age and spent anywhere from one to 26 days in the hospital for their injuries. Among other findings:

- There was one fatality, and [intensive care unit](#) (ICU) admission was required in 36 percent of the patients.
- More than three-quarters of the children (76 percent) broke at least one bone. Skull [fractures](#) were more prevalent than extremity fractures.
- More than a quarter of the children (27 percent) sustained a concussion, while between 25 percent and 30 percent of children had intracranial [injury](#) and bleeding within the skull.

"Just because golf carts don't usually reach speeds other recreational vehicles can, this doesn't mean they are harmless," said Mariano Garay, MD, a Penn State College of Medicine researcher who is one of the abstract's authors.

While injuries to children using all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are getting increased attention, he said, parents still may not realize how dangerous golf carts can be for children because research has been more limited.

This lack of awareness about the hazard golf carts pose to children contributes to the high rate of head injuries, said William Hennrikus, MD, FAAP, a senior author of the abstract and pediatric orthopedic surgeon in Hershey, Penn, especially since helmets usually aren't worn while using the carts. Skull fractures accounted for nearly half (44 percent) of all fractures children in the study sustained.

"We recommend that [children](#) under 16 years old not drive the golf cart at all," he said, "and when golf carts are used, they should be driven at cautious speeds, under 10 miles per hour."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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