

### Head injury facts for Alberta

Serious head injuries\* take their toll on the health of Albertans; listed below are some fast facts about head injuries.

#### Deaths

During 1997, 227 Albertans died from head injuries accounting for nearly 17% of all injury-related deaths and resulting in over 8000 potential years of life lost: <sup>2</sup>

- Nearly half of all deaths from head injury were motor vehicle related.
- The age range of 15-19 years accounted for the greatest percentage of deaths at 14.1% of all head injury deaths; the 20-24 year age range followed this at 12.3% of the total head injury deaths.

#### Hospitalizations

In 1997 over 2400 Albertans were hospitalized in Alberta with a diagnosis of head injury: <sup>1</sup>

- The ages ranged from as young as one month and as old as 98 years. The average age was 34.5 years; the mode age was less than one year old.
- Nearly 20% of patients required treatment in a special care unit
- The average length of stay for inpatient hospitalizations for head injuries was 6.4 days.
- Intracranial injury of other and unspecified nature was the most frequently recorded most responsible diagnosis at 23.7% (574 discharges), followed closely by concussion at 23.4% (568 cases).
- The rate of head injury hospitalizations was 87.0 per 100,000 population. The highest rate was in the oldest age group consisting of those 85 years or older at a rate of 326.6 per 100,000 population. The second highest rate was in the youngest age group consisting of those younger than one year at 195.4 per 100,000 population.
- Falls accounted for the majority of the head injuries at 36.3% (880), followed by motor vehicle related injury at 30.1% (729), and assault at 9.6% (233).
- Falls were the leading cause of head injury in all age ranges except between ages 15 and 44 where motor vehicle related injury was the leading cause.

#### Diagnosis

In the one-year period between April 1, 1997 and March 31, 1998, more than 10,000 Albertans visited emergency rooms in Alberta and received a most responsible diagnosis of head injury:<sup>3</sup>

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- Falls accounted for over 4100 of these visits.
- More than 50% of the people treated for head injuries in emergency rooms were younger than 20 years of age. The greatest volume of emergency room visits for head injuries were between the ages of one and four years.

**Note:**

*\* Serious head injury or head injury as referred to in this document includes skull fractures, concussions, cerebral lacerations and contusions, subarachnoid/subdural/extradural hemorrhages, intracranial hemorrhage, intracranial injury.*

- Region 17 – Northwestern was not included in the 1997/98 data submissions

1. Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, 1997 Inpatient Database
2. Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, 1997 Death Database
3. Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, 1997/98 ACCS Database

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