



Northern Health Position on Preventing Injury

Northern Health wants to improve quality of life by promoting the prevention of injuries among all Northern residents. This will be achieved by working with individuals and community partners to support and promote:

- A shared understanding that injuries are preventable.
- A shared commitment to protecting the right of all to live, work and play injury-free.
- Joint efforts to develop environments, programs and policies that support the prevention of injuries across the ages.
- Joint efforts to address injuries and injury-prevention for those at higher-risk, including children and youth, seniors, men and Aboriginal peoples.

Northern Health will promote injury prevention through the following actions:

- Based on current data, Northern Health will support evidence-based injury prevention strategies to reduce the number of deaths and hospitalizations from: motor vehicle crashes, suicide and self-harm attempts, falls and childhood injuries.
- Using a population health approach, Northern Health will support further investigation to determine risk and protective factors and appropriate prevention strategies to address injuries in Northern Health.
 - *This should involve comprehensive reporting of annual injury data and trends, consider contextual information and variations by HSDA, identify priority areas and best practices and make recommendations for partnerships. In supporting BC's Aboriginal population, it will be important to consider the environmental and cultural contexts that impact Northern BC's Aboriginal people and communities.*
- Northern Health will lead multi-level action on all injuries in the form of a regional injury prevention coalition.
 - *This coalition will use data and other evidence to mobilize action and respond in the short, medium and long-term to changing injury prevention priorities. This coalition will be proactive and multi-sectoral, taking a systematic approach. Similar to the federal collaboration for injury prevention, such a collaborative can provide strategic and consistent messaging and direction.*
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to address injury prevention in Northern BC with internal and community-based partners across the region and following the Ottawa Charter approach; develop partnerships identified above and expand to include sectors that may not already be identified.

For further information, please refer to the complete Northern Health **Position on Injury Prevention** available on the Northern Health web site: www.northernhealth.ca (About Us/Position Statements/Addressing Risk Factors), or by using the following address: www.northernhealth.ca/AboutUs/PositionStatements.aspx

Injuries in Northern Health

Injury is the leading cause of death to Northerners in the prime of their life. Every month in Northern Health:

- More than 365 people are injured seriously enough to require medical attention.
- An average of 13 people will die as the result of a preventable injury.

The leading causes of injury-related death and hospitalization in Northern BC include: motor vehicle crashes, suicide and falls.

Motor Vehicle Crashes

Motor vehicle crashes have been one of the top two leading causes of injury deaths and this trend has remained constant. Males are twice as likely to be killed in a motor vehicle crash as females.

Suicide

Suicide is a complex and preventable public health concern. No single risk factor can be considered the sole contributor to a suicide death; multiple factors at the individual, family, community and societal levels need to be considered. In 2008-09, suicide surpassed motor vehicle crashes, becoming the leading cause of injury death in Northern Health.

Falls

Falls account for most injury-related hospitalizations. Compared to provincial rates, residents of Northern BC are at increased risk for a fall that requires hospitalization; Northern Health has the highest rate of hospitalization for a fall of all health authorities in the province. Seniors are at increased risk of fall-related injury. In Northern Health in 2009/2010, there were 555 fall-related hospital cases for individuals over age 65.

Our Most Vulnerable Populations

Some populations are at higher risk of injury. This includes children and youth, seniors, men and Aboriginal peoples.

Children & Youth are at increased risk of unintentional injuries. Northern Health has the highest injury death and hospitalization rates for children and youth among all BC health authorities. The key is to reduce the frequency and severity of these injuries, particularly because of the life-long health and social implications.

Seniors are at increased risk of injury from a fall, motor vehicle crash or suicide. This can be due to reduced balance, environmental hazards and age-related physical, mental and other health challenges. These changes can affect their ability to maintain their balance, drive safely and handle the stresses of aging.

Men are more likely than women to engage in risk-taking behaviours, putting them at greater risk for severe injury and death. Men account for 94% of workplace injury deaths and Northerners suffer over 1/3 of the province's workplace fatalities.

Aboriginal Peoples may be at increased risk of injury due to isolated living conditions, longer driving distances, overcrowded and low quality housing and poor social conditions. Injuries are a leading cause of death, hospitalization and disability among Aboriginal peoples in BC.

