



Baby Boomer Sports Injuries

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**U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
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Sports-related injuries among those ages 35 to 54 -- today's baby boomers -- increased about 33% from 1991 to 1998. There were just under 276,000 hospital emergency room-treated injuries to persons 35 to 54 in 1991 compared to slightly more than 365,000 sports injuries to persons of these ages in 1998. This increase in injuries, which occurred in 16 popular sports activities, was due primarily to baby boomers' increased numbers participating in these sports.

When all medically-attended injuries in these popular sports were included, CPSC estimated there were a total of more than 1 million injuries to baby boomers in 1998 (compared to 778,000 such injuries to persons 35 to 54 in 1991). These sports injuries to baby boomers cost the nation over \$18.7 billion in 1998.

Bicycling and basketball were associated with the largest number of 1998 baby boomer sports injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms. Of special note (see below), baby boomers suffered a relatively high number of head injury-related deaths while bicycling.

Baby boomers represented almost one-third of all Americans who participated in sports in 1998. These 79.1 million people comprised over 29 percent of the total U.S. population. In 1998, there were 14 million more Americans in the 35 to 54 age group than in 1991.

Sports Injuries and Deaths

Seven sports showed significant increasing trends in the number of emergency room-treated injuries in the 35 to 54 age group in 1998. These were: bicycling, golf, soccer, basketball, exercise and running, weightlifting and in-line skating. Participation data showed increases in baby boomers' sports participation for most of these sports. (Participation data was not available for weightlifting, and exercise and running.)

Three sports showed significant decreasing trends in the number of emergency room-treated injuries and decreasing trends in the number of participants. These were: skiing, tennis and volleyball.

Figure 1 (attached) compares injuries for 1991 and 1998 for 16 popular sports.

For three sports, there were large numbers of deaths reported to CPSC. These were: bicycling (290 deaths a year, all but 35 motor vehicle-related); swimming (67 deaths a year associated with swimming pools); and skiing (7 deaths a year).

Safety Equipment-Related Issues

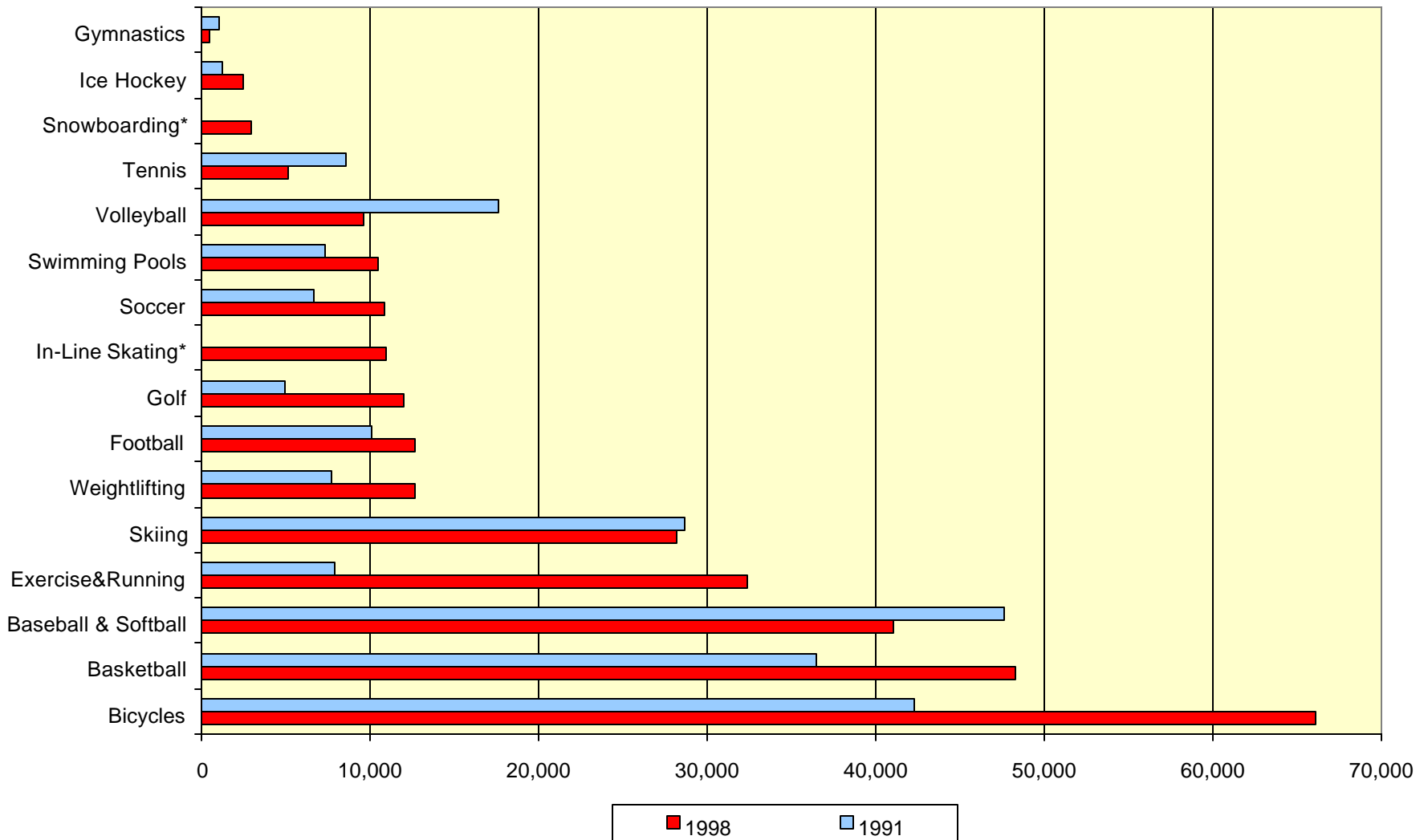
Baby boomers who rode bicycles died from head injuries at nearly twice the rate as children who rode bikes. This difference is likely the result of greater helmet usage among children. According to CPSC, 69% of children wear helmets when bicycling compared to only 43% of baby boomers.

Baby boomer in-line skaters, however, were injured less frequently than other skaters. In 1998, about 3.2 out of every 1,000 baby boomer in-line skaters were treated in an emergency room for a skating injury. Among children under 18, this number was 4.6 out of every 1,000. For the population as a whole, it was 4.1 per 1,000 skaters. Baby boomers suffered a much smaller proportion of arm and hand injuries than other age groups, which may be an indication they are wearing appropriate protective equipment such as gloves, wrist guards and elbow pads.

Conclusion

It is important for baby boomers to stay active and to participate in sports. But safety is an essential consideration. For example, baby boomers can reduce serious head injuries by wearing bike helmets when bike riding. Other sports-related injuries can be avoided or reduced by following such precautions as wearing other appropriate sports safety equipment, warming up before vigorous exercise, and increasing one's amount of exercise gradually.

**Figure 1. Estimated Number of Emergency Room Treated Injuries
Among Persons 35 - 54 Years of Age
Associated with 16 Popular Sports Categories, 1991 and 1998**



SOURCE: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Directorate for Epidemiology, National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS)

* NOTE: In-line skating and snowboarding were new sports in the 1990s. Injury data were first collected for in-line skating in 1993 (4,310 estimated injuries) and snowboarding in 1994 (1,520 estimated injuries).