

Injuries among Native Americans: Fact Sheet

Occurrence

- Injuries are the leading cause of death for Native Americans ages 1 to 44 and the third leading cause of death overall (CDC 2003).
- Injuries and violence account for 75% of all deaths among Native Americans ages 1 to 19 (Wallace 2000).
- Native Americans 19 years and younger are at greater risk of preventable injury-related deaths than others in the same age group in the United States. Compared with blacks and whites, this group had the highest injury-related death rates for motor vehicle crashes, pedestrian events, and suicide. Rates for these causes were two to three times greater than rates for whites the same age. During 1989–1998, injuries and violence caused the deaths of 3,314 Native American children living in Indian Health Service (IHS) areas (Wallace 2003).



Groups at Risk

Native Americans as a group are at increased risk of injury, but Native American males are at even greater risk for many types of injuries. Compared to their female counterparts, Native American males ages 20 years and older are (CDC 2003)

- twice as likely to die from a motor vehicle crash.
- nearly four times more likely to die from pedestrian-related injury.
- nearly twice as likely to die from fire and burn injuries.
- five times more likely to drown.
- four times more likely to commit suicide.
- three times more likely to be murdered.

Injury rates among Native Americans vary between state and regional areas.

Risk Factors

- Motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian-related injury were the leading causes of unintentional injury-related death among Native American adults 20 years and older. Adult motor vehicle-related death rates for Native Americans were more than twice that of whites and almost twice that of blacks (CDC 2003).
- Adult pedestrian death rates for Native Americans were almost three and one-half times that of whites and twice that of blacks (CDC 2003).
- Fire-related death rates for Native Americans were almost two times greater than that of whites. Rates for blacks were almost twice as high as those for Native Americans (CDC 2003).
- Native American drowning rates were nearly three times that of whites and more than twice that of blacks (CDC 2003).
- Among Native Americans 19 years and younger, motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of injury-related death, followed by suicide, homicide, drowning, and fires. Between 1989 and 1998, firearm-related death rates increased 13%; homicide increased 20%; and suicide rates remained unchanged (Wallace 2003).

References

Adekoya N, Wallace LJD. Traumatic brain injury—American Indians and Alaska Natives—United States, 1992–1996. *MMWR* 2002;51(14):303–5.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS)(2003). Available from: URL: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars.

Wallace LJD, Patel R, Dellinger A. Injury mortality among American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Youth — United States, 1989–1998. *MMWR* 2003;52(30):697–701.

Indian Health Service. Indian health focus: injuries, 1989–99. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service, 1999.

Wallace LJD. Injuries among American Indian and Alaska Native Children, 1985–1996. Atlanta (GA): CDC, 2000.