

### TEST YOUR SAFETY I.Q.

**Q** Which sport or recreational activity results in the highest proportion of multiple injuries?

**A** In a U.S. study of youth sports and recreational injuries, the highest proportion of injury events involving multiple injuries were due to riding animals – a higher proportion than bicycling, inline skating, or sports related falls.<sup>1</sup>

**Q** Where do the majority of horse-related injuries occur?

**A** The home – In 2000, 36% of injuries to youth occurred at home, 23% took place in a recreational area, 19% occurred on a farm and 5% occurred in school.<sup>2</sup>

## Think**First** about...

### DEATH AND INJURY STATISTICS

- In the year 1999, 15,000 horse injuries to children ages 15 and under required emergency room visits.<sup>3</sup>
- The most frequent cause of death and serious injury for mounted and dismounted horse activities is head injury.<sup>4</sup>
- Head injuries are associated with approximately 60% of all equestrian deaths and 18% of equestrian injuries.<sup>5</sup>
- Aside from death, brain injury survivors may suffer personality changes, intellectual and memory impairment, or epilepsy.<sup>6</sup>
- Only 20% of equestrians wear protective headgear every time they ride.<sup>7</sup>
- Falling or being thrown from a horse accounts for the majority of mounted injuries, while being kicked or trodden on accounts for most dismounted injuries.<sup>8</sup>
- Dismounted injuries require hospitalization approximately 42% of the time, while mounted injuries require hospitalization in only 30% of incidents.<sup>9</sup>
- Fractures, soft tissue damage, and head injuries are the most common types of injuries inflicted by horses.<sup>10</sup>
- The arm, leg and head/face are the most common body parts to be injured.<sup>11</sup>

### WHEN INJURIES ARE MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR

- 80% of horse-related injuries take place while a rider is in the saddle.<sup>12</sup>
- Only 20% of injuries occur while the horse is being handled.<sup>13</sup>
- The majority of horse-related injuries occur while riding for pleasure.<sup>14</sup>

### WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO INCUR THIS TYPE OF INJURY?

- Equestrian injuries are much more common among females than males.<sup>15</sup>
- The average age of an injured equestrian is between 10 and 19.<sup>16</sup>
- Riders with 5 or more years of experience are more likely to be injured.<sup>17</sup>
- Riding English style is more dangerous than any other style of horseback riding.<sup>18</sup>
- Riders who spend 15-24 hours each month on horses are more likely to be injured.<sup>19</sup>

### HEALTH COSTS

- Lifetime costs for acute head injury can be over \$3 million.<sup>20</sup>
- The cost per day for the treatment of acute head injury is \$25,000.<sup>21</sup>

# ThinkFirst about...

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Always wear an equestrian helmet that meets ASTM standards and is SEI certified.
- Supervise riding at all times.
- Ride with children under 6.
- Ensure that both the horse and riding activity are appropriate for the child's skill level.
- Never tie a child to the horse or saddle.
- Always wear boots or shoes with a heel and covered ankle when using stirrups.
- Ensure that all equipment is free of damage and secured.
- Prior to mounting a horse, fasten the harness. Do not unfasten it until after dismounting.
- Be aware of anything that may spook your horse.

### STILL NOT CONVINCED?

Approximately 60% of all horse-related deaths are due to head injury. This number can be reduced greatly by the use of an appropriate helmet, which is estimated to decrease death from head injury by 70-80%.<sup>22</sup> Horse riding can be a very pleasing experience. However, horses are living creatures that cannot be completely controlled. Even the most experienced rider faces the risk of their horse disobeying them or being spooked by an unforeseen event or object. It is important that every rider, regardless of their experience, remain alert and aware of their environment as well as using the appropriate safety gear. By being cautious and careful, riders can maximize the enjoyment that horses bring.

## ThinkFirst

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