

NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed for Release:
12:01 a.m. ET June 9, 2009

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New National Study Finds Dramatic Increase in Number of Acute Computer-Related Injuries
Young children at highest risk

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)- The number of acute injuries associated with computers is on the rise. Over the past two decades, the number of U.S. households with at least one computer has increased. While other studies have documented chronic conditions associated with computer use such as blurred vision and back pain, no previous research has examined acute computer-related injuries. A recent study conducted by the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital found that from 1994-2006, the number of acute computer-related injuries increased by 732 percent, from nearly 1,300 to approximately 9,300 injuries per year.

According to the study, published in the online issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, the most common acute computer-related injuries included lacerations (39 percent) and contusions and abrasions (23 percent). While more than half of all injuries occurred to the extremities, the majority of injuries to young children were to the head. Patients younger than 10 years were five times more likely to sustain head injuries than those older than 10 years.

"Children younger than 5 years had the highest injury rate and the greatest increase in rate over the study period," said study author Lara McKenzie, PhD, principal investigator at the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital and faculty member of The Ohio State University College of Medicine. "There are potential hazards, especially for children, in navigating a home that contains computers and computer equipment."

The most common cause of all acute computer-related injuries was hitting or getting caught on a part of the computer (37 percent), followed by the computer equipment falling on the patient (21 percent). However, the leading cause of injury for both children younger than 5 years and adults 60 years and older was tripping or falling on computer equipment.

"Various agencies provide safety recommendations for the home, including the bedroom, bathroom, living room and kitchen, but the home office or computer area is rarely considered," said Dr. McKenzie. "Parents should take steps to make their computer areas and home offices as safe as possible by keeping computer equipment away from the edges of desks and out of reach of young children, installing safety covers on unused electrical outlets, allowing young children to only use the computer with adult supervision, and keeping play areas separate from the computer workstation."

Other recommendations to prevent acute computer-related injuries include situating the computer station away from walkways and against a wall, positioning the computer on a stable work surface free of clutter, organizing and securing wires and cords out of the way, and anchoring furniture and heavy computer components to the wall or floor. Additionally, adults should remember if they are moving a computer to first check that the path is

clear, and then to lift the computer straight up and hold it close to the body, making vertical movements at the knee.

This is the first published study to examine acute computer-related injuries on a national level. Data for this study were collected from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), which is operated by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The NEISS dataset provides information on consumer product-related and sports and recreation-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments across the country.

The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) works globally to reduce injury-related pediatric death and disabilities. With innovative research at its core, CIRP works to continually improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, biomechanics, prevention, acute treatment and rehabilitation of injuries. CIRP serves as a pioneer by translating cutting edge injury research into education, advocacy and advances in clinical care. In recognition of CIRP's valuable research, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently named the Center for Injury Research and Policy as one of only 13 centers in the United States to be designated as an Injury Control Research Center. Learn more about the Center for Injury Research and Policy at <http://www.injurycenter.org>.