

# EpiNews

Health Statistics & Assessment

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## Injuries - The Third Leading Cause of Death in Snohomish County

Injuries were the third leading cause of death in Snohomish County during 2007, surpassed only by cancer and heart disease. Each year approximately 340 people in the county die from various injuries, which represent 8.2% of all deaths. Despite a widely-held belief that injuries occur randomly, they are similar to diseases in that they are not random and have identifiable risk and preventive factors that make them preventable. Many injuries can be prevented through education, changes in the built environment, and public policy.

Unintentional poisoning deaths increased by 400% from 1990 through 2007 in Snohomish County, and hospitalizations for unintentional poisonings doubled. The main reason for these increases was the increased use of prescription opioid painkillers such as oxycodone.

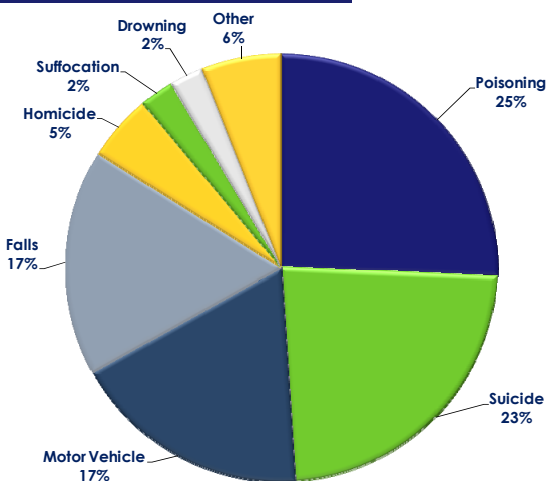
Although the suicide mortality rate in Snohomish County declined by 31% between 1990 and 2007, suicide was still the cause of nearly one-quarter of the county's fatal injuries. Males had higher rates of suicide than females, although females attempted suicide more often than males. Suicide mortality rates were highest in males older than age 64.

Deaths from injuries sustained in motor vehicle collisions declined by half from 1990 through 2007. Males were three times more likely than females to be killed in a motor vehicle collision. Speeding was the most commonly cited factor in motor vehicle collisions, but driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs was the most commonly cited factor in fatal collisions. Although motor cycles comprised only 3% of the registered motor vehicles in Snohomish County during 2007, they were involved in 20% of the fatal collisions.

Falls were responsible for one in six injury deaths in Snohomish County. The rate of mortality due to falls doubled between 1990 and 2007. About three fourths of fatal falls occurred in people aged 65 and older. Of these, three fifths occurred in the home, and most of the remaining occurred in nursing homes.

More information is available in the recent report *Intentional & Unintentional Injuries in Snohomish County* at [www.snohd.org/Shd\\_HS/HealthData.aspx](http://www.snohd.org/Shd_HS/HealthData.aspx) under Reports and Publications, or call 425.339.8618.

**Causes of Injury\* Death in Snohomish County, 2003-2007 (n = 1,690)**



From 2003 through 2009, unintentional poisoning was the leading cause of injury death accounting for a quarter of all injury deaths. Suicides were responsible for another 23%. Injuries from motor vehicle collisions were the third most common type of injury death and falls were the fourth. Suicide was the leading injury cause of death for males, while unintentional poisoning was the leading cause for females.

In 2007 injuries caused more than 8,000 hospitalizations in Snohomish County, making them the leading cause of non-childbirth-related hospital admissions and costing \$288 million in hospital charges. Falls were responsible for nearly half (49%) of injury-related hospital admissions.

Injuries sustained in motor vehicle collisions were the second most common type of injury hospitalization, accounting for 13%. Snohomish County experienced a 30% increase in hospital admissions for injuries between 1999 and 2007.

\* All injuries are unintentional except for homicide and suicide. Injuries of undetermined intent are excluded.  
- Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding.

### Report Communicable Diseases in Snohomish County

STDs: 425.339.5218 | Fax: 425.339.8707      After hours emergency only: 425.339.5295  
Tuberculosis: 425.339.5225 | Fax: 425.339.5217      24-hr reporting: 425.339.5235  
Other communicable diseases: 425.339.5278 | Fax: 425.339.8706

The mortality rate for unintentional poisonings in Snohomish County increased by an average of 10% each year since 1991 through 2007.

## Snohomish County Partnership for Secure Medicine Disposal: An Update



Beginning December 1, 2009, Snohomish Health District (SHD) partnered with Snohomish County and its local law enforcement agencies to provide residents with an easy, responsible way to safely dispose of unused, unwanted, and expired medicines, including prescribed controlled substances. A recent SHD report, *Intentional & Unintentional Injuries in Snohomish County*, found that injuries were the third leading cause of death in 2007, and unintentional poisonings were the number one cause of injury deaths accounting for one in four of these deaths. Between 1990 and 2007, unintentional poisoning deaths increased more than 400% in Snohomish County. One primary reason for the increase was the use of opioid painkillers, such as oxycodone (i.e., Percodan and Percocet) and hydrocodone (Vicodin). See the previous article for more details about injuries and unintentional poisonings.

The Secure Medicine Disposal Program is an innovative, multi-agency effort to address growing concerns about prescription drug abuse, accidental poisonings, and the presence of pharmaceutical compounds in our streams and groundwater. It also removes these drugs from medicine cabinets, preventing accidental use by young children or abuse by teenagers. This program is a unique addition to drop off locations at Bartell Drugs and Group Health Pharmacies, as it also allows citizens to dispose of prescribed controlled substances.

In the 13 months from December 1, 2009 through December 31, 2010, citizens have safely and anonymously disposed of more than 1.5 tons (3,096 pounds) of unwanted medicines at 27 law enforcement-based sites in Snohomish County. Locations can be found by visiting [www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org) and searching for "pharmaceuticals." (Other locations throughout Washington State can be found at [www.takebackyourmeds.org](http://www.takebackyourmeds.org)). Bothell, Everett, Lynnwood, Marysville, and Snohomish police departments have been the top producers. Citizens have actively embraced the program and consistently thank law enforcement personnel for providing this secure disposal opportunity.

Snohomish County's Medicine Disposal program is an important public health prevention strategy. It prevents unintentional poisoning deaths and decreases contamination of our environment. Other important prevention strategies include increasing physician awareness of opioid dosing and education of the public about drug abuse. The following websites provide additional valuable information:

- ➔ Opioid Dosing Guidelines:  
[www.agencymeddirectors.wa.gov/opioiddosing.asp](http://www.agencymeddirectors.wa.gov/opioiddosing.asp)
- ➔ National Institute on Drug Abuse site for Physicians:  
[www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed/](http://www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed/)
- ➔ Drug Education Resources:  
[www.samafoundation.org](http://www.samafoundation.org)

For more information, contact Jonelle Fenton-Wallace, R.S., at [jfenton@shd.snohomish.wa.gov](mailto:jfenton@shd.snohomish.wa.gov) or 425.339.5250.

### CD Cases Reported Jan – March, 2011

Disease	2011	2010
AIDS	1	7
Arboviral disease	0	0
Campylobacteriosis	41	26
Chlamydial infections	439	404
Giardiasis	11	25
Gonorrhea	51	40
Hepatitis A	0	0
Hepatitis B, acute	0	1
Hepatitis B, chronic	19	29
Hepatitis C, acute	1	1
Hepatitis C, chronic*	148	165
HIV infection	8	5
Listeriosis	2	0
Measles	0	0
Meningococcal infections	2	4
Mumps	0	0
Pertussis	35	4
Rubella	0	0
Salmonellosis	13	15
Shiga Toxin-producing E.coli§	2	5
Shigellosis	2	2
Syphilis; primary, secondary and other	13	3
Tuberculosis, pulmonary	3	3
Tuberculosis, other	2	4

\*Includes probable and confirmed cases  
§ Previously reported as E.coli O157:H7