



# All-Terrain Vehicle Safety



In 2011 throughout the U.S., 57 children under the age of 16 died and approximately 29,000 others were taken to hospital emergency rooms because of ATV accidents. From September 2012 through August 2013, we treated 28 people here at the Joel A. Halpern Trauma Center at Westchester Medical Center for serious injuries caused by ATVs; nine of those people were under the age of 14.

ATV injuries include fractured bones as well as head and facial injuries because of rollovers, collisions with stationary objects, and falling off the vehicle. Fatalities are usually the result from injuries to the head and neck, often because the rider was not wearing a helmet.

The Trauma Surgeons at Westchester Medical Center and the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital would like to remind everyone that there are certain safe practices that all riders should follow to avoid making an unexpected trip to the hospital.

## **What is an ATV anyway?**

An ATV is any self-propelled vehicle with two or more wheels manufactured for use primarily off-road.

## **ATV Operation in New York State**

In New York, you don't need a license to operate an ATV but the ATV must be registered with the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

Children age 10 through 15 may operate an ATV under certain circumstances: with adult supervision or without supervision on land owned or leased by parent or guardian or without supervision if child has taken and ATV safety course approved by the DMV. Adult supervision means that the child must be accompanied by someone at least 18 years of age, or a person 16 or 17 years of age who holds an ATV safety course completion certificate from an approved safety course provider.

Contact your local DMV for more information.

## **Why is it dangerous for children to operate ATVs?**

Children lack the strength, cognitive abilities, depth perception, emotional maturity and judgment necessary to operate them. The American Academy of Pediatrics warns all parents that no child under the age of 16 should drive or ride an ATV of any size because they are so dangerous.

## How can I prevent ATV injuries?

- Attend an ATV driver's safety course.
- Do not permit a child under the age of 10 to operate an ATV and provide constant adult supervision to a child over the age of 10 who is riding an ATV.
- Always protective gear:
  - **Helmet** – to protect your head, especially your brain, from injury.
  - **Over-the-ankle boots** – to protect feet and ankles from injury.
  - **Goggles** – to protect eyes from rocks and dust thrown up by ATVs.
  - **Gloves** – to protect fingers and hands.
  - **Long pants and long-sleeved shirt** – to protect skin from rocks, trees, and other debris.
- Ride a vehicle that is right for your size.
- Don't allow passengers on a single-rider ATV, and no more than one passenger on an ATV designed for two people. Multiple passengers increase the risk of crashing.
- Only ride only on designated trails at a safe speed, never on public roads.
- Make sure the ATV is properly maintained.
- Do not ride an ATV on the road or at night.
- Do not ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Take an ATV safety course.

By following these tips, you will reduce your risk of injury and enjoy your ride more.

For more information, please contact Elizabeth Corcoran, Trauma Injury Prevention and Outreach Coordinator, at (914) 493-5846.