

Reducing Horse-Related Injuries to Children

Nearly one in five emergency department visits for horse-related injuries involves a child under age 15. Tips for having a safe experience include:

1. Children should possess the balance and coordination to ride independently. They should be able to follow directions and to interact properly with the instructors and other students. Typically 6-8 years of age.
2. Most injuries to children 7 years of age and younger occur from being kicked or stepped on. Younger children need to be instructed on horse safety but also closely supervised by an adult at all times when around horses.
3. Children's lessons should be given by an experienced, qualified instructor who has a history of safely teaching children. The American Riding Instructors Association (www.riding-instructor.com) and Certified Horsemanship Association (www.CHAIinstructor.com) offer a list of certified instructors.
4. Lessons should take place in a safe, flat, uncluttered, fenced location away from traffic or external noises. The size of the horse should match the size of the child, and children should only ride on horses trained for beginners or novice riders.
5. Children should always wear a helmet, hard-toed shoes and long pants. The saddle should fit the child and size of horse.

Dr. Fernanda C. Camargo and her friend Skye.

