



## BLANK CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

IOWA HEALTH SYSTEM

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ATV Safety

Are you treating your ATV like a toy?

Despite the fact that ATVs can weigh between 400 and 600 pounds and travel at speeds up to 70 mph, many children are allowed to drive or ride them for recreation. "We've seen patients as young as 3 years old that have been injured while riding an ATV," says Vidya Chande, MD, medical director of the emergency department at Blank Children's Hospital. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, in 2003 alone, 111 children died and 38,600 children were injured in ATV crashes.

ATV-related injuries are significantly more severe than other sports-related injuries, and the average length of hospitalization is longer. In comparison to injuries involving a bicycle, ATVs were six times more likely to result in hospitalization and 12 times more likely to result in fatalities. Injuries most commonly occur when an ATV rolls over, when drivers hit stationary objects or when a rider falls off of the vehicle. The majority of ATV-related fatalities are caused by injuries to the head and neck.

Blank Children's Hospital offers these precautions to keep you and your family safe:

- Children younger than 6 should **NEVER** ride ATVs.
- Children younger than 16 should not operate adult-size ATVs.
- Supervise your child when riding an ATV.
- Children should **NEVER** operate ATVs on public roads or paved surfaces. ATVs should be operated only on designated trails.
- All youth-sized ATVs should be equipped with identification flags.
- Never carry passengers on ATVs; riding double on an ATV is against the law in Iowa.
- **ALWAYS** require your child to wear his helmet with face protection, a long sleeved shirt, long pants, non-skid boots and gloves.
- Children ages 12-17 are required by law to take a safety course before operating an ATV in Iowa.

"Critical thinking skills and a great deal of physical strength are required for safely operating an all-terrain vehicle. Most young children have neither," says Dr. Chande. "If a parent is not comfortable giving the keys to the family car to the child to drive, then an ATV should be off limits as well."

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*Blank Children's Hospital is an 88-bed facility that continues to expand to provide the most complete medical care to children across Iowa. Currently, Blank Children's features more than 60 pediatric specialists uniquely skilled in providing medical care to children with more than 150 primary care doctors, including pediatricians and family practice physicians. The number of pediatric medical specialists, programs and services is constantly growing to improve care and meet changing health needs of children. Blank Children's Hospital is a part of Iowa Health – Des Moines that includes Iowa Methodist, Iowa Lutheran and its affiliated physicians and clinics. For more information about Blank Children's Hospital log on to [www.blankchildrens.org](http://www.blankchildrens.org) or call 515-241-5437.*