

At Northwestern Medicine, the neurosciences team provides comprehensive care for persons with brain and spinal cord disorders. Efforts to reduce the occurrence of these injuries include educational programs available to school or community groups. For more information, call the Injury Prevention Team at 815.748.8962. TTY for the hearing impaired 815.756.6448.

The Northwestern Medicine ThinkFirst Chapter offers programs of the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation, founded by America's neurosurgeons.

These injury prevention programs are funded in part by the Illinois Department of Transportation and through generous donations from individuals, businesses, foundations and other organizations. For more information or to make a donation, please contact the Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital Office of Philanthropy at 630.933.4483, or visit our website at nm.org.



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ThinkFirst For Teens[®]

Brain and Spinal Cord Injury
Prevention Program



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Lifelong injuries can happen to anyone

Every year, there are approximately 11,000 spinal cord injuries and 1.7 million brain injuries in the United States. Most at risk for these injuries are young people, ages 15–24, whose growing independence gives them a false sense of invincibility. Actions are often taken with little regard to consequences: the seat belt is forgotten; the helmet is not cool; it is less embarrassing to drive drunk than to call for a ride; an argument turns to violence. Far too often, the devastating results of these actions lead to permanent disability or death. These incidents are almost always preventable.

Making safe choices

Most brain and spinal cord injuries can be prevented by learning to make safe choices before acting. ThinkFirst For Teens is a brain and spinal cord injury prevention program designed to raise awareness of avoidable risks and empower teens and young adults to make safe choices. A fast-paced, dynamic program, ThinkFirst For Teens captures the students' attention while giving them valuable information. It is not intended to shock or frighten, but to prompt them to integrate safety into their active lives.

Education reinforces safety

Presented to classrooms or assemblies, ThinkFirst helps educate teens on the realities of brain and spinal cord injuries. The three-part presentation begins with a short video featuring several young people injured as a result of potentially risky activities. Their stories capture student interest.

The second portion is presented by a healthcare professional. Anatomy, physiology, irreversible brain damage and paralysis are explained. Risk factors and simple safety measures are emphasized, including responsible driving, seat belts, helmets and other protective sports equipment, checking unknown waters feet first and avoiding violent situations. The effects of alcohol and drugs also are discussed.

In the third part of the program, a guest speaker who sustained a brain or spinal cord injury tells students openly how a poor choice can change a person's life forever. The speaker explains not only the physical effects, but the emotional, social and economic impact. Through personal testimony and a question-and-answer session with the speaker, students see firsthand how a tragic injury can happen to anyone.

ThinkFirst Northwestern Medicine is the Illinois State Chapter and Training Center for the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation. Founded by America's neurosurgeons, ThinkFirst has chapters in other Illinois regions, as well as more than 150 chapters nationwide.

Since 1990, ThinkFirst Northwestern Medicine has presented over 4,000 educational programs to more than 220,000 students in area middle schools, high schools and colleges.

School programming available

You can make the first move in reducing traumatic injuries by offering an injury prevention program in your school or organization. Call today to schedule a presentation and help your students learn to "Think First!"

Safe choices can prevent injury

Most traumatic injuries are not "accidents"—they are preventable. The choices we make determine our safety. Sometimes it takes speaking with someone with a serious injury to realize that.

Northwestern Medicine presents ThinkFirst For Teens, a brain and spinal cord injury prevention program with a powerful message.