

Playground Safety

Every Child should be Injury Free!

The National Playground Safety Institute says every year more than 200,000 children are treated in emergency departments because of injuries that took place on playgrounds. About 45% of playground-related injuries are severe—fractures, internal injuries, concussions, dislocations, and amputations. About 75% of the nonfatal injuries related to playground equipment occur on public playgrounds. Most occur at schools and daycare centers.



Supervise children at the playground

- Make sure the playground has no blind spots. You need to be able to see the children you want to supervise.
- Remove all drawstrings from children's clothing before they enter the playground. Other loose objects like necklaces should also be removed.
- Never let a child play on playground equipment wearing a bicycle helmet. While a child should always wear a bicycle helmet while riding his or her bike, he or she should remove it before playing at the playground because of the potential strangulation hazard.

Survey the playground site

- Before allowing children to play, inspect the playgrounds for hazards such as broken glass, litter, sharp objects, broken equipment, etc.
- Watch the playground for tripping hazards like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.

Check the equipment

- Know which types of equipment are appropriate for your child's age and make sure that he or she plays on the appropriate equipment for his or her age group.
- Check the equipment's temperature before letting children play on it. Metal equipment can cause serious burns in hot, sunny weather. Metal equipment, particularly slides, should be in shaded areas. Children must wear shoes on the playground.
- Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
- Make sure that all spaces on equipment measures less than 3½ inches or more than 9 inches. Spaces between these two measurements can entrap children.

- Make sure there is no dangerous hardware like protruding bolts and open S-hooks that would catch a child's clothing. The gap in S-Hooks should not admit a dime.
- Check the equipment for sharp edges or points that could cut a child's skin.
- Check the playground regularly to see that the equipment is in good condition and free of missing or broken or missing parts, and/or hardware. Wood equipment should be free of rot and splinters and plastic equipment should not be cracked.

Examine the surfacing

- Check the playground's surfacing to make sure it's appropriate. Acceptable surfaces include loose-fill materials such as engineered wood fiber, shredded rubber, and sand or pea gravel. However without consistent maintenance these surfaces can hide hazardous materials. Make sure loose fill surfaces like wood chips are at the proper depth. Most playground safety groups recommend 12 inches of loose-fill material.
- Better options include synthetic surfaces such as rubber tiles, mats or poured surfaces. Hard surfacing like asphalt, concrete, dirt and/or grass should never be used under equipment.
- Check to make sure that appropriate surfacing is under all equipment and its use zones. Generally fall zones for equipment are six ft in all directions. For swings the length of the fall zone should be twice the height of the beam from which the swing hangs.
- Report any unsafe condition immediately to the owner or operator of the playground: principal of the school, director of the children's center or director of the park.

For more information go to www.InjuryFree.org