



FACTS ABOUT INJURIES TO CHILDREN ON PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds are an opportunity for children to develop motor, cognitive, perceptual and social skills. Unfortunately, playgrounds are often the sites of accidental injuries.

- Between 1990 and 2001, at least 147 children died from playground equipment-related injuries. Nearly 70 percent of these deaths occurred on home playgrounds.
- In 2003, more than 208,100 children ages 14 and under were treated in hospital emergency rooms for playground equipment-related injuries; children ages 5 to 14 accounted for nearly 75 percent of these injuries.
- Playground injuries are the leading cause of injury to children in childcare and to children ages 5 to 14 in schools.
- It is estimated that one-third of playground equipment-related deaths and 75 percent of playground equipment-related injuries occur on public playgrounds.
- The majority (53 percent) of injuries that occur on public playgrounds involve climbing equipment, while the majority (67 percent) of injuries that occur on home playgrounds involve swings.
- Lack of supervision is associated with 40 percent of playground injuries. A recent study found that children play without adult supervision more often on school playgrounds (32 percent of the time) than playgrounds in parks (22 percent) or childcare centers (5 percent).
- Nearly 40 percent of playground injuries occur during the months of May, June and September.
- The total annual cost of playground equipment-related injuries among children ages 14 and under was estimated to be \$6.8 billion in 2003.

The leading cause of playground equipment-related fatalities is strangulation, and the majority of these deaths occur on home playgrounds.

- Strangulation resulting from entanglement or entrapment is the primary cause of playground equipment-related fatalities, accounting for nearly 56 percent of the deaths. Falls to the surface are responsible for an additional 20 percent of the deaths.

Nonfatal playground equipment-related injuries are most often due to falls. The majority of these nonfatal injuries take place on public playgrounds, including school, childcare and park playgrounds.

- Approximately 70 percent of playground equipment-related injuries involve falls to the surface, and 10 percent involve falls onto equipment.
- Protective surfacing under and around playground equipment can reduce the severity of and even prevent playground fall-related injuries. The risk of injury in a fall onto a non-impact-absorbing surface such as asphalt or concrete is more than twice that of falling onto an impact-absorbing surface.
- It is estimated that only 25 percent of public playgrounds and 9 percent of home playgrounds have appropriate impact-absorbing surfacing around stationary equipment.
- The risk of injury is four times greater if a child falls from playground equipment that is more than 1.5 meters (approximately 5 feet) high than from equipment that is less than 1.5 meters high.
- A young child is at increased risk of injury when playing on equipment designed for older children. Only 42 percent of U.S. playgrounds have separate play areas for children ages 2 to 5 and children ages 5 to 12.

Certain groups of children are at higher risk for playground-related injuries.

- Female children have a slightly higher risk of sustaining playground-related injuries than males.
- Children ages 5 to 9 account for more than half of all playground-related injuries.

Some safety laws and regulations protect children from playground-related injury hazards.

- Playground equipment guidelines and standards have been developed by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and the American Society for Testing and Materials. At least seven states have enacted some form of playground safety legislation.
- A recent study found that the rate of playground-related injuries at North Carolina childcare centers dropped 22 percent after a law was passed requiring new playground equipment and surfacing in childcare facilities to conform to U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines.
- The CPSC has issued voluntary guidelines for drawstrings on children's clothing to prevent children from strangling or getting entangled in the neck and waist drawstrings of outerwear garments, such as jackets and sweatshirts. Children are at risk from strangulation when drawstrings on clothing become entangled in playground equipment.