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## PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Hundreds of thousands of children receive treatment in hospital emergency rooms for playground-related injuries every year. Playground activities can also be fatal to children.

Because children often like to use playground equipment in unintended and unexpected ways, it's important to have adults present to monitor play activities.

- If you cannot personally supervise your child's activities, make sure that adult supervision is present at the playground. Children should not be unsupervised in play areas.
- Make sure children play on age-appropriate equipment. Children ages 2-5 have poorer coordination and balance than children ages 5-12. Play areas for different age groups should be separated, properly identified, and provided with equipment especially designed for them. Equipment for the "tot lot" may be similar to that of the older children but size appropriate, with smaller and shorter slides and climbing bars, all with rounded edges and smaller grips. Younger children should have soft, chair-style swings which provide all-around support.
- Inspect playground equipment for hazards. Make sure that all equipment is firmly secured to the ground and is in proper working order. Inspect equipment to ensure that there are no bolts or other objects sticking out and that S-hooks are entirely closed. Check vertical climbing ropes for secure anchoring at the base and make sure that the rope cannot be looped back on itself to form a noose.
- Make sure that platforms greater than 30" in height have guardrails (38" height minimum for older children and 29" for younger children) to prevent falls.
- Strangulation accounts for approximately half of all deaths related to playground equipment. Avoid dressing children in loose fitting clothing or clothing with drawstrings; they can get caught on pieces sticking out, open-ended hooks, gaps and other parts of playground equipment. Also check any openings in the equipment itself. Children can become trapped when entering equipment either head or feet first. Younger children may not have the necessary cognitive ability and motor skills to remove their heads, especially if they become scared and panic. Any opening greater than 3.5" or less than 9" poses a potential entrapment hazard.
- Inspect the playground surface. The majority of playground injuries are the results of falls. The shock-absorbing capability of the surface is critical in determining the severity of fall injuries. Acceptable surfaces for playgrounds include rubber mulch, hardwood fiber/mulch, pea gravel, sand (12" of loose fill for equipment up to 8'),



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poured-in-place synthetic materials, rubber mats and tiles. Concrete, asphalt, packed earth/grass and rocks are unacceptable because they cannot absorb shock.

- Report any hazards on public playgrounds to the proper authorities. Playgrounds should receive regular maintenance and inspections. If any of the following are noted they should be repaired or replaced immediately:
  - Loose or worn hardware and any parts sticking out.
  - Any exposed equipment footings.
  - Scattered debris, litter, rocks or tree roots. Any missing or full trash containers.
  - Rust or chipped paint on metal equipment.
  - Splinters, large cracks and decayed wood equipment.
  - Deterioration and corrosion on structural components which connect to the ground.
  - Missing or damaged equipment components, such as handholds, guardrails and swing seats.

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[Safe Kids Worldwide](#)



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