



# Playground Safety

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## Did you know, in Canada...?

• Every year about 28,000 children suffer playground related injuries severe enough to visit a hospital emergency room.



• Since 1982, 19 children have died in playground related incidences with strangulation being the most common cause of death. Strangulation alone was responsible for 17 deaths. Children have died when they became entangled in ropes or skipping ropes that have been attached to playground equipment.



• Playground falls are a major cause of hospitalization among children. These falls occur most often while children were playing on slides, monkey bars, or swings. The most common injuries in playgrounds include fractures, spinal injuries and head injuries.

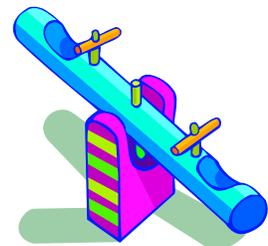
• A child only needs to fall 3 feet onto hard-packed earth to incur a fatal head injury. The harder the surface, the more likely it is that the injury will be severe.

• Finally, most playground related injuries are predictable and preventable whether they take place at a public park, schoolyard, or residential home. Playground activities should be closely supervised. Here's how!

## Playground Safety Tips

• Children should only use playground equipment appropriate to their age and ability.

• Children should be taught to play safely. No pushing, shoving, tripping, etc.





• Supervise children on the playground.

• Pay attention to clothing that could catch on equipment and be a choking hazard:

- Tie up loose strings on hoods, jackets and hats or choose to remove them.
- Tuck in all clothing that can get caught on playground equipment.
- Avoid loose clothing and zip up jackets.
- Avoid scarves (use a neck warmer instead).
- Remove helmets. They can get trapped on equipment and strangle a child.



• Watch for unsafe situations and teach children to use the equipment as it is intended to be used:

- Position yourself on the slide feet first, sitting up, and be sure that everyone is out of the way before going down the slide
  - Sit on the swings and stay away from the front and back of moving swings
- Only one child should use slides and swings at a time.

• Discourage children from bringing skipping ropes onto the playground. Ropes or skipping ropes attached to equipment can entangle and strangle a child.



## Playground Equipment Checklist

• Is the playground equipment securely anchored to the ground?

• Is the equipment regularly checked and maintained?

• Is the equipment in good condition? Look for splinters, cracking, rust, sharp edges, and chipped paint.

• Are pieces of the playground equipment at least 1.8 metres away from each other or another structure or fence?

• Does the playground equipment have guardrails and barriers to prevent children from falling? The recommended barriers and guardrail heights are:

- For children from 18 months to 5 years of age the barrier should be at least 72.5 cm (29 inches)
- For children from 5 to 12 years of age, the top height should be at least 95.0 mm (38 inches).

• Are playground structures at a safe 'fall height' (no higher than 2.1 metres)? As the 'fall height' increases, so does the amount of protective surfacing required.

• Are the surfaces around and underneath all equipment well cushioned with impact-absorbing materials such as wood chips, pea gravel and sand? Climbing equipment should have 25.4 to 50.8 cm (10 to 20 inches) of sand, wood chips, tire chips or pea gravel underneath depending on the fall height. Check the depth of surfacing and rake it to keep the surfacing loose.



• Be extra careful in the winter as these surfaces can become frozen and hard-packed.

• Are there any spaces on the play equipment where the children can become trapped? To reduce incidents of head entrapment and prevent serious head and neck injuries, gaps in play space equipment should be less than 90 mm (3.6 inches) or greater than 225 mm (9 inches).



• Are there any areas where children can pinch or crush their fingers?

• Are there any features that could entangle drawstrings, scarves, or other clothing on play equipment where there is uncontrolled motion, like sliding and jumping?

• Are swing seats made of soft material such as rubber or canvas?



• Is the play area away from traffic?

• Before you let your children play in a sandbox rake through the sand and remove any debris and hazards, and inspect for animal contamination and insect problems.

## Is Your Community Playground Safe?

If you have safety concerns about a playground in your community use the following steps as a guideline:

- Find out who owns or operates the playground? Public playgrounds have a sign posted with the name of the organization that operates the playground, a phone number and other contact information.
- Contact the owner/operator of the playground to relate your safety concerns about the playground area and/or equipment, and inquire when the playground was last inspected.
- Make the parents in your neighbourhood aware of the situation and ask them to spread the word to other parents. Should they also place phone calls to the owner/operator of the playground your collective voice will be that much stronger towards positive action.

