



## Safety Standards for Children's Playgrounds

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Many of us can still recall all of the fun we had as children playing on various outdoor structures called “jungle gyms.” While new [safety standards](#) have led to important design changes in play equipment, kids will always need adult supervision since some of the more dangerous playground structures and surfaces are still around. Furthermore, adults are needed to readily enforce each playground’s safety rules.

### Playground Safety Statistics

According to [Safe Kids USA](#):

- During one recent year, 206,900 children required emergency room treatment for [injuries](#) sustained on playground equipment. About three-fourths of them were between the ages of 5 and 14;
- The primary cause of injury on a playground is strangulation. Over 50 percent of playground deaths occur in this manner. Another 20 percent of playground deaths are caused by falls to the ground;
- Nearly half of all playground injuries are severe. They include concussions, fractures, internal injuries, dislocations and even amputations;
- Even though safer play areas have been built, public playground injuries (for children under five years of age) have doubled since 1980;

- Children under the age of four are more likely than others to suffer face and head injuries. Kids between the ages of 5 and 14 tend to incur the most arm and hand injuries;
- Between 1990 and 2000, at least 147 children died due to playground equipment problems. About 70 percent of these deaths occurred while the children were on their home playgrounds. *Constant parental supervision is obviously critical.*

## General Advice About Playground Structures, Surfaces and Activities

The following information should help parents, teachers and others establish more efficient playground safety standards and more easily determine which playground structures and surfaces should be preferred over others.

- When selecting a new playground, always look for one that provides separate equipment for your younger and older children;\_
- Always take at least a small emergency safety kit with you so you can clean and bandage small wounds or otherwise tend to your children's needs;\_
- Try and stay closely involved with your kids while they move around the playground so you can possibly prevent or minimize any injuries they may sustain;\_
- Take plenty of water along since dehydration can makes kids feel dizzy, possibly causing more falls;\_
- Always take your cell phone with you in case any of your kids suffer serious injuries and you need to dial 9-1-1 for help. Never visit with friends on your cell phone when you should be watching your kids since it just takes a second for an accident to occur;\_

- Make sure your children never wear jackets or other clothes with drawstrings around the neck or waist while playing since those can more readily cause strangulation injuries or death;\_
- Whenever possible, try to select playgrounds featuring surfaces composed of sand, mulch, loose-filled wood chips or shredded rubber. Avoid letting your children play on cement or gravel surfaces;\_
- If you're just taking a small child to a playground, look for one with structures built low to the ground;\_
- When selecting a playground, look for one with structures featuring plenty of guardrails so that if your child starts to fall, she can reach out and more readily regain her balance;
- Discourage your children from ever running fast on playgrounds. If they must run, remind them to occasionally glance down at the ground surface to avoid stepping in holes. However, they should normally keep their eyes focused forward so they can avoid running into other children;
- Create your own family's safety rules for playing outdoors and review them often with your kids. Remind your children to always come and get you when they're planning to go play outside so you can readily monitor their activities;
- Since about two-thirds of home playground injuries involve playing on swings, consider standing right next to your child's swing set while he plays there.

We hope this information helps you keep your children safe while they navigate various playgrounds.

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