



Playground Safety for Children Ages Birth to 14 Years

Each day in New York State (NYS), on average, more than 16 children from birth to 14 years of age are treated at a hospital for an injury sustained from falling off playground equipment; an average of one child is injured severely enough to require hospitalization.

The good news is that **you**, as a parent or caregiver, can play a major role in preventing playground injuries.

What kinds of surfaces should cover the playground?

- Areas under and around playground equipment must be covered with soft materials that are nine to 12 inches deep and extend six feet from all sides of play equipment.
- Soft materials will help protect children from injuries to the brain and bones if they fall. Acceptable playground surface materials include rubber mulch, hardwood chips, shredded rubber, sand, pea gravel, and safety-tested rubber.
- Concrete, asphalt, blacktop, grass, and dirt are unsafe surfaces to place under and around play equipment as these materials provide the least cushion for a child if they fall.
- A complete list of approved playground surface materials can be found on the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at www.cpsc.gov.

Does my child need to be supervised while playing on a playground?

- Yes. Adult supervision is one of the best ways to prevent falls by watching to make sure that your child uses playground equipment properly.

What playground equipment hazards should I be aware of?

- Make sure your child uses age-appropriate equipment. Children under the age of two should not climb higher than 32 inches (about three feet), and children ages two to five should not climb higher than 60 inches (about five feet).
- Ensure that there is ample room between play equipment to act as a buffer zone in case your child falls.

- Be sure your child only plays on sturdy equipment in good physical shape. Always check for signs of rust, chipped paint, and cracked, broken or sharp parts. Fix any of these hazards as soon as possible if it is your home play equipment.
- Beware of spaces where your child's head or body could get stuck. A child's head can be trapped in openings between three and a half and nine inches wide.

What are some other tips for playground safety?

- Young children (those under the age of about two and a half years) should never go down a slide on the lap of an adult. This puts the child at risk for breaking a leg. Children should not use slides until they can do so on their own.
- Remove all drawstrings from your child's clothes and make he/she is not wearing any necklaces or scarves while playing; these items could get caught on equipment and strangle a child.
- While it is beneficial for children to wear helmets while playing sports, they should not wear helmets when climbing trees or playground equipment. A helmet may get stuck on a tree or piece of equipment and strangle a child.
- Ropes, jump ropes, clotheslines, or pet leashes fastened to playground equipment can strangle children.

Where can I find more information about playground safety?

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Playground Safety Checklist (www.orthoinfo.aaos.org)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (www.healthychildren.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)
- Home Safety Council (www.homesafetycouncil.org)
- Kids Health (www.kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/outdoor/playground.html)
- National Program for Playground Safety (www.playgroundsafety.org/elementary/tips.htm)
- National Safety Council (www.nsc.org/resources/factsheets/hl/playground_safety.aspx)
- National Program for Playground Safety (www.playgroundsafety.org/elementary/tips.htm)
- Safe Kids USA (www.safekids.org)

- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (www.cpsc.gov)

NYS Data Source: NYS DOH, Bureau of Injury Prevention
http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention/
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