

Child Safety

Playground Safety

Year round, playgrounds offer a great source of enjoyment for many children. They provide a place for children to explore, socialize and test their skills. Unfortunately, they can also be dangerous. Resulting injuries range in severity and may include bruises, fractures, head injury and even death.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), Ontario emergency departments received 8,734 visits due to playground injuries in 2004-2005. This represents an average of 23 visits everyday. According to SMARTRISK, children between the ages of five and nine have the highest injury rates, with arm fractures being the most common type of injury for emergency departments and hospitalization.

It is important for parents to supervise their children and to ensure the environment they are playing in is safe.

Here is a list of things you can do to help ensure your child's safety:

- To avoid strangulation, remove items of clothing that may become trapped in the playground equipment. Remove drawstrings and other cords from clothing, use a neck warmer instead of a scarf, use mitten clips rather than cords, remove bike helmets and put aside skipping ropes.
- The ground underneath and surrounding the playground equipment should be covered in a deep soft surface such as sand, pea gravel and wood chips or a synthetic material such as a rubber surface. This surface material should be at least 6 inches (15 centimetres) deep and is meant to soften the impact should your child fall.
- Any opening on the play equipment, such as spaces between the steps of a slide and between railings, should either be smaller than 3.5 inches (9 centimetres) or bigger than 9 inches (22.5 centimetres) to prevent head entrapment.
- The play area should be free of debris like broken glass and garbage. The equipment should be in proper working order: sharp edges, handrails, barriers and railings should be in place to prevent falls and the equipment should be free of sharp edges and broken parts.
- The play equipment should be suited for your child's age. A good rule to follow is, if your child needs help to climb onto play equipment, he or she should not use it.
- Children under the age of five:
 - Should not play on equipment that exceeds 5 feet (1.5 metres);
 - Should be under constant supervision – to prevent your child from falling, you should be able to easily reach him or her at all times.
- Children over the age of five:
 - Should be supervised at all time as they like to be more adventurous and take more chances – remind your child to play safely.
- Notify the playground owner/operator if you have any concerns about the equipment. The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) has developed the only nationally recognized standard on children's playspaces and equipment, CAN/CSA-Z614-03

Teach your child these simple rules for playground safety:

- Wait your turn;
- Slide down feet first;
- Don't go up the slide ladder until the other person has gone down the slide;
- Hold on to railings;
- Sit down on swings and slides;
- Keep away from moving swings and the bottom of slides.

Useful Playground Safety websites:

[Safe Kids Canada](#)
[Caring for Kids](#)
[SMARTRISK](#)
[Canadian Standards Association](#)

