

205,860

Approximate number of preschool and elementary children that receive emergency care for injuries occurring on playground equipment each year

76%

Percentage of playground injuries occurring in public playgrounds

About 45%

Percentage of playground injuries involving public equipment on school grounds

147

Deaths to children younger than 15 that involved playground equipment from January 1990 to August 2000

55%

Percentage of playground injuries to girls

45%

Percentage of playground injuries to boys

Approximately 15%

Percentage of playground injuries that are classified as severe

Approximately 3%

Percentage of playground injuries that require hospitalization

79%

Percentage of playground injuries classified as falls to the surface

53%

Percentage of injuries on public playground equipment associated with climbing equipment

19%

Percentage of injuries on public playground equipment associated with swings

*From The National Program for
Playground Safety*

Safety Sounds

A Monthly Safety Bulletin From SPSG Schools Group

*April 21st – 25th is
National Playground Safety Week*



Playground Safety

Each year more than 200,000 children visit hospital emergency rooms because of playground injuries. Approximately 15 children die each year because of playground injuries. Many playground injuries can be prevented. Use this guide to examine playgrounds.

Soft surface

Because nearly 70 percent of playground injuries are caused by falls to the ground, improper surfacing is the first thing supervisors should watch for when they inspect a playground. Wood chips, bark mulch, wood fibers, sand, pea gravel, shredded tires and rubber mats cushion falls well.

Avoid concrete, grass and dirt, they're too hard. A minimum depth of 12 inches of material surrounding each piece of equipment in a 6-foot fall zone is recommended. And regular maintenance is also crucial; if not daily, then at least monthly.

Swings

Swings are the pieces of moving equipment that are most likely to cause injuries to children. Animal swings have caused several deaths and should be removed from playgrounds. Metal or wooden seats should be replaced with soft seats. Swings should be set far enough away from other equipment so that children won't be hit by a moving swing. Only two swings should be in each supporting framework, and they should be at least 24 inches apart. Full-bucket seats are recommended for younger children. Half-bucket seats are dangerous because babies and toddlers can slide out of them.

Smooth sliding

Slides should be well-anchored, have firm handrails and good traction on the steps. There should be no gaps between the slide itself and the platform. There should also be a bar at the top of the slide so that children have to sit before they slide. One of the greatest dangers with slides occurs when drawstrings on children's clothes get caught

at the top of the slide. Although most children's clothing manufacturers have quit making drawstrings, many children have older clothes.

Safe seesaws and merry-go-rounds

Spring-loaded seesaws are best for young children. Avoid adjustable seesaws with chains because children can crush their hands under the chains. A traditional type seesaw should have a tire or some other object under the seat to keep it from hitting the ground. Merry-go-rounds, or "whirls" or "roundabouts", are best for school-age children. They should have good hand grips, and the rotating platform should be level, free of sharp edges and have adequate clearance to prevent crushing or severing limbs.

Climb carefully

Forty percent of all playground injuries are related to climbing equipment. More children are injured falling off climbing equipment or horizontal ladders than anything else on the playground. Children under 4 shouldn't play on this equipment. However, climbers are great for encouraging upper body strength. Watch older children when they're climbing, check that steps and handrails are in good condition, and make sure a guardrail or barrier surrounds raised platforms. Any climbing ropes should be secured at the top and bottom. The number of injuries caused by monkey bars is so significant that many experts recommend that they be removed from all playgrounds.

*From National Safety Council
www.nsc.org*