



Nothing Says Springtime More Than a Trip To the Playground

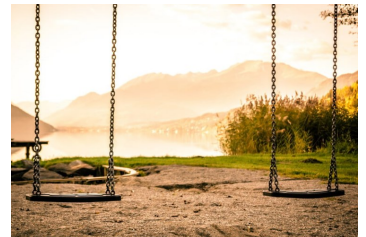
As cold winter temperatures turn to warmer days ahead, the chatter of kids playing and enjoying the outdoor parks and playgrounds will become commonplace. Being outdoors and getting physical activity on the swings, slides, monkey bars and other playground equipment, is a great way for kids to learn and explore, all while getting some much needed movement in their lives.

Playgrounds have long been a place where kids gather and can “be a kid”. That being said, it is important that the adults in charge of maintaining the playgrounds or those supervising on the playground know what dangers exist and how to prevent injuries from occurring in this type of setting. Here are a few reminders to keep playgrounds a great and safe place for kids:



Playgrounds are generally identified for the ages of kids that they are designed for. This usually includes kids ages 2—5 years of age and those ages 5-12 years of age. The equipment size, height and ways they are played on are geared for the body stature and maturity of the kids in these age ranges. Be sure to have younger kids seek out the play areas that are for them, and older kids should keep to their designated space.

Most injuries that occur on playgrounds happen due to falls and improper surfacing below the equipment. It is recommended that there be at least 9-12” of proper surface material below playgrounds. Grass is not considered a safe surfacing as its depth is not long enough and below the soft grass is the hardened earth surface. Therefore, materials such as pea rock, sand, wood chips or mulch should be used to protect kids from concussions, broken bones and other injuries that happen with falls. Playground surfacing needs to be well maintained as areas such as under swings or at the end of slides will have the material moved or spread out and it needs to be filled in when that happens. An easy way to assess the level of the surfacing is to place a painted line on the legs/support poles of the equipment at 9” up from the ground before the surfacing material is put in place. Once that line is made, fill the area with 12-15” of the chosen material and when the line is exposed at the 9” mark, you know it is time to fill it up again!! Proper surfacing is the most important way to limit or reduce the severity of injuries from playground equipment falls.



Have children refrain from wearing clothing or accessory items on the equipment that could get caught on and cause a strangulation danger. These items include hooded sweatshirts with drawstrings, backpacks, bike helmets or long and flowing skirts. Bring a change of clothes to use the equipment and/or set these items off on a bench nearby.



Make sure that playground equipment is used in the manner in which it was designed for. Many areas now come with a covering over the play surface to keep kids from standing on areas that could pose a dangers. However, kids left unsupervised may get creative and use equipment in a way it which it is not intended.



If those supervising kids on the playground notice anything that could pose a danger to kids playing, reach out to the entity in charge of maintaining the playground. This could include broken equipment, surfacing that has been worn away, trash on the site, broken fence links or a whole host of other things.