



A Division of Child Safety Solutions, Inc.

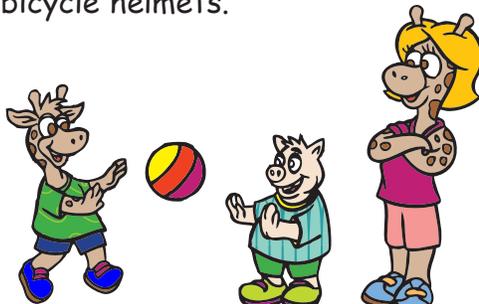
# SMART STEPS TO PLAYGROUND SAFETY



Each year over 500,000 injuries related to playground equipment are treated by doctors and hospitals.<sup>1</sup> Most of these injuries are the result of falls from playground equipment. Review the following guidelines to help keep your children safe.

## ARRIVE PREPARED

- Adults should always be present when children play. Be sure you can clearly see your children at all times on the playground. Parental supervision will help to ensure that children stay safe on the equipment and in their interactions with each other.
- Children should dress in clothing without hoods, loose hanging strings, scarves, fringes, hooks or cords as these can cause accidental strangulation if caught on equipment. Jewelry such as necklaces and earrings also should be removed.
- Skid resistant shoes that will protect children from foreign objects should be worn on outdoor playgrounds.
- When visiting a playground, carry a basic first aid kit with you.
- Before playing on the playground, children should remove bicycle helmets.
- Review and enforce playground rules with your child.



## KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

- Not all playground equipment is appropriate for every child. Children ages 2-5 are developmentally different from children ages 5-12. Playground equipment areas should be separated for children in these age groups. Preschoolers should play on equipment that is no more than five feet high while school age children should play on equipment that is not more than seven feet high.
- Check playground equipment before allowing children to play on it. Be sure equipment is anchored safely to the ground and equipment surfaces are not hot to the touch. Check equipment for dangerous hardware such as open S-hooks and protruding bolts. Be sure there are no sharp points or edges and that elevated surfaces have guardrails.
- Most playground injuries are related to falls to the surface below. Make sure the surfaces around playground equipment have at least twelve inches of wood chips, mulch, sand or



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<sup>1</sup>American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

pea gravel. Poured-in-place rubber mats or tiles are also acceptable. Concrete, asphalt, grass, blacktop, packed dirt or rocks are not suitable playground surfaces.

- Be aware that spaces such as those between guardrails or between ladder rungs should measure less than 3.5 inches apart or more than 9 inches apart to eliminate the possibility of a child's head becoming trapped.
- Make sure protective surfacing extends at least six feet in all directions from play equipment.
- Watch for tripping hazards. Pick up trash and litter and look for exposed tree roots, rocks or exposed concrete footings. Report any problems to the proper officials. Follow up to be sure repairs have been made.



- Remind children to sit down while swinging, slow down before getting off the swing, and not to walk near someone else who is swinging.
- When climbing, children should use both hands, stay inside guardrails and climb only on equipment that is dry. When jumping off equipment, children should first check to make sure that there are no other children in the way. Remind children that when they jump, they should land on both feet with their knees slightly bent.

- Teach children that climbing up the front of a slide is never acceptable.

Children should climb the ladder taking one step at a time and holding on to the handrail. The safest way to slide down is feet first. Only one person should slide down at a time after checking to be sure that the bottom of the slide is clear. Once they reach the bottom of the slide, children should move away so it is clear for other children to come down.

## PLAYGROUND SAFETY TIPS

- How children use playground equipment and how they interact with other children on the playground will impact their safety. Teach children rules and safety tips to help ensure a positive experience on the playground.
- Help children understand what it means to play responsibly. It is not safe to push or roughhouse while on jungle gyms, slides, swings, seesaws or other playground equipment. Encourage children to respect one another by taking turns and including everyone.

For more information,  
contact the I'm Safe! Network,  
[www.imsafe.com](http://www.imsafe.com).



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