Playground Safety Tips for Summer 2021

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Now that summer is in full swing and people are enjoying the outdoors, playgrounds are a popular place for families to congregate. That makes it a good time to remind parents and caretakers about the importance of supervising the children that play on and around these structures.

The risk of outdoor injury increases as the temperatures rise, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that every year emergency departments in the United States treat more than 200,000 children ages 14 years and younger for playground-related injuries. About 56 percent of those injuries are fractures and contusions/abrasions.

Meanwhile, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources notes that the major causes of the 10 to 12 deaths that occur on playgrounds each year are “entanglements of clothes, strings and ropes,” “falls to underlying surfaces,” and “head entrapment in equipment openings.” Some other common ways children get hurt on playgrounds include by tripping over the equipment and getting hit by it (e.g., getting hit by a swing). Scrapes, bruises, and cuts are frequent, while the aforementioned fractures and concussions are also possible.

Playground equipment should always be in good working order, with no jagged and/or broken edges and no missing parts. Surfaces should not be slippery or excessively hot, and the grounds surrounding the playground should be soft and
clean. If your local playground is lacking on these things or doesn't follow safety and structural regulations, you may want to find your child a new place to play.

General common-sense precautions for the playground include:

- Always have an adult present to supervise playground activity.
- Check playgrounds for hazards or broken equipment before the children begin to play in the area.
- Make sure children are dressed appropriately for the playground, avoiding clothes like drawstrings and bike helmets, which can get caught on equipment.
- Choose an appropriate play area with appropriate equipment for your child’s age.
- Ensure any trampolines have protective netting surrounding them, and only let one child on the equipment at a time.
- Check with the school or city in charge of the playground to make sure it is being properly maintained.

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