

Playground Injury Statistics

America's playgrounds are not as safe as we'd like to think. In 2004, the National Program for Playground Safety graded each state on the safety of its playgrounds, awarding an averaged national grade of C+.

Additionally, a 1999 Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) study found that more than 200,000 children suffered playground injuries serious enough to be seen in an emergency room.

Among the CPSC findings:

- More than three-quarters of injuries (76 percent) occurred on public playground equipment, while 23 percent occurred on home equipment.
- Of the injuries on public playground equipment, 45 percent occurred on school playgrounds, and 31 percent occurred in public parks.
- Fifteen percent of injuries were classified as severe.
- The most common type of injury was fractures (39 percent), most involving the wrist, elbow and lower arm. Lacerations accounted for 22 percent of injuries, contusions or abrasions 20 percent, and strains or sprains 11 percent.
- Falls to the playground surface were involved in 79 percent of all injuries.
- Girls were slightly more likely to be injured (55 percent of injuries) than were boys (45 percent).
- In children aged 4 and under, the most common injuries (49 percent) were to the head and face. Most of these injuries occurred on climbing equipment and slides.
- In children aged 5 to 15, the most common injuries (49 percent) were to the arm and hand, and most occurred on climbing equipment and swings.

The CPSC also looked at deaths resulting from playground equipment between 1990 and 2000. Of the 147 deaths reported over that period, 90 percent occurred on home playground equipment, and more than half (56 percent) involved hanging, primarily from ropes, shoestrings, cords, leashes, clothing strings, and other items either tied to or entangled with the equipment.

Among its conclusions, the CPSC advised conducting further research into which playground surfaces are better suited to minimizing hand, wrist and arm injuries, and which playground equipment should be restricted based on a child's age. The researchers also pointed out that home playground equipment is much less likely than public equipment to be properly anchored or to be built on an adequately protective surface.