

# Kids are unpredictable. INJURIES DON'T HAVE TO BE.

## A step ahead... at the playground

Tips to keep your 5–9 year old safe.

### Help children have fun at the playground so they won't get hurt

#### Playground injuries:

- Are a common reason for children to be treated at the hospital for an injury.
- Can be serious, especially when children fall from high equipment onto a hard surface.
- Occur on school, park and backyard equipment.

#### Who is most at risk?

- Children 5–9 years of age are injured more frequently at a playground than at any other age.

#### When are children most at risk?

- When there is a lack of adult supervision.
- When many children are on the equipment.



### What you can do

## 1 Learn how injuries can occur

#### Kids are curious, active and imaginative. Between 5–9 years of age they:

- Like to be the biggest, fastest and best!
- Enjoy jumping, balancing and climbing.
- Think they can do more than they are able to do.
- May not see the danger in what they are doing.
- May forget the safety rules, especially when excited.
- May not be able to judge how far away a piece of equipment is and whether they can reach it.
- May be influenced by older children to try new things and use equipment in ways that can be dangerous.

## 2 Create safer places for children

- Do a safety-check before children play and report damaged playground equipment to your local parks and recreation or school office:
  - Choose playgrounds with a deep, soft surface such as sand, pea gravel, mulch, or rubber chips. You should be able to dig your heel into the ground to a depth of 15 cm (6 inches).
  - Check the surface for sharp objects, garbage and animal waste.



- Make sure the handrails and railings are secure and free from splinters.
- Check that the openings in the equipment are less than 9 cm (3.5 inches) or greater than 22.5 cm (9 inches) to prevent a child's head from getting stuck.
- Inspect the playground for any damaged equipment (rough edges, loose bars, broken swing chains, nails and bolts that stick out).
- Most public playgrounds have been updated to meet new safety standards. However, private or backyard play equipment, including trampolines, may not yet be designed to meet these standards.
- **Use equipment designed for your child's age.** Playgrounds are designed for two age groups: for children less than 5 years old, and for those 5–12 years old.
- **Choose playgrounds with shaded areas** when possible.
- **Contact** your local by-law office if dogs are off leash in playground areas and become a safety issue for children.
- **Do not use playground equipment in the winter.** The ground is frozen and it becomes a more dangerous surface on which to fall. Mitts and boots make it more difficult for children to use the equipment safely.

# 3

## Watch children closely

### Parents and caregivers:

- Actively supervise your children at the playground.
- Stand next to children when they are learning a new skill or climbing.
- Reduce a child's chance of choking on the play equipment:
  - Avoid dressing children in clothes with drawstrings or scarves.
  - Remove bike helmets before playing on the equipment.
  - Do not take skipping ropes into the playground area.

# 4

## Create and follow family safety rules

### Teach children the playground safety rules including:

- Wait and take turns.
- Walk away from bullying and unsafe situations.
- Slide down feet first and walk up the steps or ladders (instead of running up the slide).
- Never push.
- Wear shoes with rubber soles and laces tied.
- Take your helmet off before you play on the equipment.
- Tell an adult if the equipment is broken.

**Kids are unpredictable.  
INJURIES DON'T HAVE TO BE.**

### For more information:

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

1-877-721-7520

[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

