

Pointers For Parents

Backyard Fun In The Sun

Learn How To Reduce The Chance For Play Set Injuries This Summer

(NAPSA)—Now that the weather is warmer and kids are heading outdoors to play, it is important for parents to take some essential precautions to create a safer backyard play environment. According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), there were nearly 47,000 injuries to children under age 15 on home playgrounds in the last year studied. The chance of these injuries occurring—ranging from bumps and bruises to head trauma—can be reduced by following some simple guidelines.

“Nothing is more important than active adult supervision to enforce the rules that will help prevent a serious injury on backyard playgrounds,” says Meri-K Appy, president of the nonprofit Home Safety Council. “In addition, parents and caregivers should make sure their children’s play set is age-appropriate and in good condition—and that the surface underneath and around the equipment provides a soft landing if and when their kids do take a tumble.”

Backyard Play Set Safety Tips:

1. Ensure your play set has proper surfacing. Proper surfacing is an important component in reducing injuries due to a play set fall; however, it is often an overlooked backyard playground safety feature. Dirt and grass do not provide the appropriate level of cushioning. Instead, loose fill materials such as wood mulch, wood chips, fine sand or fine gravel is recommended. The material should extend at least six feet in all directions and depth should vary from nine to 12 inches, depending on the surfacing type.

2. Make sure that your backyard play set is sturdy. Lumber sturdiness is also an important element to play set safety. Using four-



by-four corner posts will minimize the side-to-side sway motion that less substantial lumber may sometimes cause. Also, make sure that you use A-frame legs to provide a firm footing for the swing beam.

3. Select a backyard play set that meets maximum safety guidelines. Parents also want to choose play sets that meet ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) standards. Although these standards are voluntary, they can help assure parents that the play sets were designed with safety in mind. One manufacturer that complies with these guidelines is Swing-N-Slide. It has introduced an innovative new bracket technology for play set assembly called the Rapid-LOC system. This system features four special brackets combined with self-drilling fasteners, which provide secure anchoring for deck supports, four-by-four uprights and accessory beams. The interlocking nature of the Rapid-LOC brackets keep the play system’s supports tightly locked—even if a screw comes loose—producing a stronger backyard play set.

For more tips, download the Play Set Safety Checklist from www.swing-n-slide.com. For information on preventing injuries, visit www.homesafetycouncil.org.