

Each year over 200,000 children receive emergency department care for playground related injuries. That is one child every 2 1/2 minutes. Most injuries are the result of falls—falls to the ground below equipment, but falls from one piece of equipment to another are also reported. These falls can cause serious brain and spinal cord injuries or even death.

Virginia Playground Injuries, 2009

- There were 56 playground fall-related injuries that required hospitalization in Virginia in 2009.
- The total hospital cost associated with these injuries was \$877,590 with a median cost per episode of care of \$10,444 and an average length of stay of 1.7 days.
- 5% of these injuries resulted in a traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- Falls from playground equipment resulted in 29% of all of the hospitalized fall injuries among children 5-9 years of age.

SAFETY TIPS:

Playground-related injuries can be prevented by creating a **SAFE** playground using the four steps listed below:

- ◆ **Supervision:** It is estimated that more than 40 percent of playground injuries are related to inadequate supervision. Adult supervision is needed to watch for potential hazards, observe, intercede and facilitate play when necessary.
- ◆ **Age Appropriate Design:** Many injuries are a result of children playing on equipment not designed for their age. Thus, the steps or railings may be too far apart or require additional strength and coordination causing children to fall or trip. Most injuries related to age inappropriateness involve children 0 - 4 years of age playing on equipment designed for older children. Select age appropriate equipment and separate play areas for different age groups -- 2 to 5 years of age and 5 to 12 years of age. These areas should be marked by signage indicating the age-appropriate areas.
- ◆ **Fall Surfacing:** Statistics indicate that nearly 70 percent of all playground injuries are related to falls to the surface. Recent studies have found that about 80 percent of playgrounds have unsuitable surfaces. Thus, an important aspect of reducing playground injuries is to provide cushioned surfaces beneath and around equipment at depths appropriate to equipment height.
- ◆ **Equipment Maintenance:** Most maintenance of equipment involves making sure the equipment's surfaces and mechanical workings are safe. Playgrounds, whether they are old, recently installed or a just a few years old, need to be inspected. Manufacturer's recalls, warnings or updates should be observed. Consumer Product Safety Commission warnings should be taken into consideration.

RESOURCES:

National Program for Playground Safety
www.uni.edu/playground/

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
www.cpsc.gov



Injury and Violence Prevention Program
Virginia Department of Health
1-800-732-8333
www.vahealth.org/injury