



Falls

Falls are a major cause of brain injuries.

Playground Safety



- Brain injury is one of the top 10 diagnoses in emergency departments for playground-related injuries.¹
- The estimated cost of playground-related injuries to children under the age of 15 was \$1.2 billion in 1995.²
- Nearly 20 children die each year from playground-related injuries. More than half of these deaths result from strangulation and about one-third result from falls.²
- Most injuries occur on the swings, monkey bars or climbers, and slides.²
- Falls off playground equipment to the ground account for more than 60 percent of all playground-related injuries.²
- Public playground equipment accounts for approximately 70 percent of all playground equipment injuries.²



Prevention of Playground Injuries

- Since more than 60 percent of all playground injuries are caused by falls to the ground, protective surfacing under and around all playground equipment can reduce the risk of serious head injury.³
- Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, pea gravel, or mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.⁴
- Adult presence is needed to watch for potential hazards, observe, intercede and facilitate play when necessary. Strings on clothing or ropes used for play can cause accidental strangulation if caught on equipment.⁵
- Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least nine feet apart. Also check that protective surfacing extends at least six feet in all directions from play equipment.⁴



Falls and the Elderly

- People ages 75 years and older represent the highest rate of traumatic brain injury (TBI) fatality. Falls are the leading cause of TBI among the elderly.⁶
- Of all fall-related deaths, more than 60 percent involve people who are 75 years or older.⁷
- Factors that contribute to falls include problems with gait and balance, neurological and musculoskeletal disabilities, psychoactive medication use, dementia and visual impairment.⁷
- Environmental hazards such as slippery surfaces, uneven floors, poor lighting, loose rugs, unstable furniture and objects on floors may also play a role in falls.⁷

Preventing Falls for the Elderly

- Exercise regularly - regular physical activity is one of the best ways to reduce your chances of falling.
- Home safety check - Remove things that might be tripped over, store items that are used often in cabinets that can be reached easily without a step stool, install grab bars in the tub or shower, use non-slip mats on the bathtubs and shower floors and install handrails and lights on all stairs and outside.
- Have your health care provider review medicines. A doctor, pharmacist or your healthcare professional should look at all the medicines taken (including over-the-counter medicines)
- Wear safe shoes. Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles.



Sources:

1. Loyola University Medical Center Injury Prevention Program, "Playing It Safe." <http://www.meddean.luc.edu/lumen/DeptWebs/brnshock/breakpoint-4-00.htm>. (February 2, 2001)
2. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, "Playground Injuries." <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/playgr.htm>. (February 2, 2001)
3. Consumer Product Safety Commission, "Home Playground Safety Tips." <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/323.html>. (February 2, 2001)
4. Consumer Product Safety Commission, "Public Playground Safety Checklist." <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/327.html>. (February 2, 2001)
5. National Program for Playground Safety, "Keep Your Children Safe." <http://www.uni.edu/playground/tips/general/checklist.html> (February 2, 2001)
6. Centers for Disease Control, "Traumatic Brain Injury in the United States: A Report to Congress." <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/tbicongress.htm> (February 2, 2001)
7. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, "Falls and Hip Fractures Among Older Adults." <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/falls.htm> (February 2, 2001)