



Is *your* child care center's playground a safe place to play?

The following information is adapted from playground safety resources provided by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. For more information, visit www.cpsc.gov.


The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that more than 200,000 children are treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms each year due to injuries sustained while using public playground equipment. An important note to all caregivers at child care centers, the majority of injuries occur from children falling from the playground equipment onto the ground.

The following checklist is provided as a guide to help make your child care center's playground a safer place in which to play.

Playground Safety Checklist

1. Make sure **surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches** of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
2. Check that **protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions** from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
3. Make sure **play structures more than 30 inches high** are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
4. Check for **dangerous hardware**, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
5. Make sure **spaces that could trap children**, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
6. Check for **sharp points or edges** in equipment.
7. Look out for **tripping hazards**, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks.
8. Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have **guardrails** to prevent falls.

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9. Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in **good condition**.

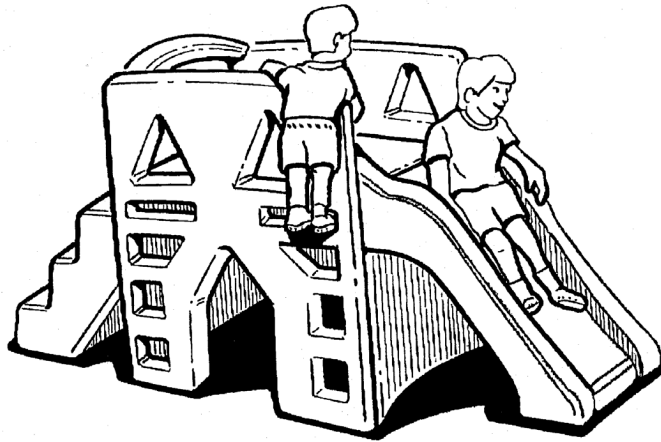
10. Carefully **supervise** children on playgrounds to make sure the youngsters are safe.

In addition to the items noted above, be aware of three hazards for which the CPSC has issued specific safety alerts:

1. **Children's Climbing Gyms Should Never be Placed on Hard Surfaces, Indoors or Outdoors**

The CPSC has issued a safety alert for parents and daycare providers emphasizing that children's plastic climbing equipment (see sample equipment graphic below) should not be used indoors on wood or cement floors, even if covered with carpet, such as indoor/outdoor, shag or other types. The CPSC states that, "*carpet does not provide adequate protection to prevent injuries.*" Child care providers should place all children's playground and climbing equipment outdoors "*on surfaces such as sand or mulch to prevent children's head injuries.*"

Look for labels on new equipment from manufacturers of plastic climbing equipment which specify the equipment should never be placed on hard surfaces such as concrete, asphalt, wood or other such surfaces.



2. **Prevent Burns on Hot Metal Playground Equipment**


Adult caregivers should check all playground equipment surfaces, most importantly metal surfaces, to determine if they are hot prior to allowing young children to play on the equipment. Examples of equipment to check include solid steel decks, slides or any steps that have direct sunlight exposure. Metal surfaces receiving direct sun exposure may be hot enough to cause serious (second- and third-degree) contact burns.

3. **Playground Cargo Nets May Pose Strangulation Hazard**

If your center's playground/play area has a cargo net for children to play on, check the openings in the net using the following hazardous dimensions guidance from the CPSC: *Nets having openings with a perimeter length (sum of the length of the four sides) of between 17 and 28 inches could allow head entrapment resulting in strangulation.*

If the openings in your child care center's cargo net fall within this potentially dangerous range, do not allow children to use the net. Contact the CPSC or the manufacturer for further instructions on any available corrections or replacements. Net openings should either be too small to permit entry of a child's body or large enough to permit free passage of a child's head.

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