

Keeping kids safe on roller coasters and other thrill rides

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Height requirements are designed to weed out kids who are too young to enjoy the ride, expert says.

(HealthDay) -- This summer, thrill-seekers will test their bravery on extreme roller-coaster rides -- twisting, flipping and spinning, all while trying to keep their lunch down.

Although the height and speed of roller coasters can look scary, amusement-park rides aren't dangerous as long as people follow the rules, said Kathryn Woodcock, an amusement-ride expert at Ryerson University in Toronto.

To keep kids safe, Woodcock offers up these safety tips:

- Height requirements for amusement-park rides are intended to weed out children who are too young to enjoy the ride or who

don't have the [muscle strength](#) needed to withstand its forces. Even if a child meets the height requirements, parents should exercise caution and determine if the ride is really suitable for their child.

- Make sure a ride's lap bar secures children, particularly if they are slim or tall for their age.
- Adults accompanying children on rides should pay close attention to the child they are supervising. Make sure any companion chosen to ride with a child is capable of handling an [emergency situation](#).
- Listen to ride operators and adhere to their rules. Children who are placed on rides that are too mature for them could panic and try to exit the ride before it's over. They also may feel traumatized when the ride is over.
- Pay attention to the condition of the rides. If lap bars do not latch properly or if brakes are not holding well, alert the ride's operator or one of the park's guest-relations professionals immediately.
- Be particularly careful about inflatable slides and bouncy castles, which can result in sprains and [fractures](#). Check to make sure they are adequately supervised, properly installed and secured to the ground.

Parents also should teach [children](#) to exercise caution when riding amusement-park rides, including following the rules even if friends are encouraging them to do otherwise, reading all posted signs and avoiding trying to make dull rides more exciting by engaging in risky behavior, Woodcock said.

More information:

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions provides more amusement-ride [safety tips](#).

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