

Lawn mowers are risky business for kids

May 29 2017



(HealthDay)—Though mowing lawns has long been a source of income for young people, experts warn that lawn mowers pose a major safety risk to children.

"We need to remind people that these are dangerous machines, and the consequences are devastating," Mariano Garay, a fourth year [medical student](#) at Penn State College of Medicine, said in a school news release. Garay has studied [lawn mower](#) injuries in children.

About 13,000 children were treated for lawn mower injuries in U.S. emergency departments in 2015, researchers said. And, kids aren't the only ones at risk from lawn mowers. More than 68,000 adults ended up in the ER that year because of the machines.

A study of nearly 200 patients 18 and younger found that more than half of those admitted to a hospital with injuries from lawn mowers underwent an amputation, usually in the lower extremities.

"The blade is so sharp and it is going so fast that body parts are no match for it," said Amy Morgan, manager of the Pediatric Trauma and Injury Prevention Program at Penn State Children's Hospital.

Children 6 and younger should stay indoors when someone is mowing, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"The mower is loud and the operator can't always see or hear a small child who may run out in front or sneak up behind," Morgan said.

"Children that young assume that adults are looking out for them, but adults who are mowing are focused on the task at-hand. It's a set-up for [injury](#)."

Young children can also be injured by sticks, rocks and other projectiles ejected by the mowever. It's a good idea to walk through the yard before mowing to make sure there are no toys or other debris, Morgan suggested.

She also reminded adults that riding mowers aren't recreational vehicles.

"Never allow a child—or another adult for that matter—to ride on one with you. We commonly see children with severe injuries from that."

In most cases, children older than 12 can use a walk-behind lawn mower safely, and teens 16 and older can safely operate a riding mower, according to the AAP.

However, it's important for parents to assess their child's coordination, maturity level and judgment.

"In our suburban communities, a [lawn](#) mower is one of the biggest pieces of machinery around the home that a child could use," Morgan said. "It's important that [adults](#) teach their [children](#) how to use it safely and supervise them until you feel they can handle the responsibility."

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [lawn mower safety](#).

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Citation: Lawn mowers are risky business for kids (2017, May 29) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-05-lawn-mowers-risky-business-kids.html>

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