

Playgrounds aren't always all fun and games

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(HealthDay)—Playgrounds are supposed to be fun. But rusty bars, litter and poorly maintained equipment can make these seemingly kid-friendly zones downright dangerous, according to a group of emergency medicine

physicians.

More than 200,000 [children](#) are treated in the emergency department each year for [playground](#)-related injuries—a dramatic increase in recent years, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

And about 20,000 of those children get treated for a [traumatic brain injury](#), including concussion, every year. Kids can also break a bone, or even develop internal bleeding due to accidents that occur on a playground.

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) noted, however, many of these injuries are preventable.

"Many [playground injuries](#) can be avoided if parents are mindful about the risks, and teach children to obey safety rules," ACEP president, Dr. Rebecca Parker, said in a news release from the organization. "We encourage children to get outside and play to promote a healthier lifestyle, but we want to make sure our children are as safe as possible."

Roughly 75 percent of playground-related injuries occur in public places. In most cases, the playground [equipment](#) is at a school or daycare center, research shows. The [emergency physicians](#) pointed out that parents, babysitters and other adult supervisors can help keep children safe on playgrounds by doing the following:

- **Pay attention.** All children should be closely monitored on the playground. Even older kids need to be watched to ensure their safety.
- **Inspect the equipment.** Check to make sure any playground apparatus a child is using is well-maintained. Be sure the area has enough cushioning to prevent injuries. It's also important to keep an eye out for broken bottles and other trash that could

potentially cause an [injury](#).

- **Don't battle crowds.** If a playground is very busy, come back another time. Children should be clearly visible to an adult supervisor at all times.
- **Consider age.** Children should only use [playground equipment](#) that is age-appropriate. Younger kids should not play on equipment that is intended for older children and vice versa.
- **Remove hoods and strings.** Children should remove hoods or clothing with strings while at the playground. Hoods can block side vision and drawstrings could present a choking hazard.
- **Follow the rules.** Children should be expected to adhere to playground safety rules. They shouldn't run, push or shove other children. Kids should also be taught to be mindful of their surroundings, such as not walking in front of a swing or climbing up the front of a slide rather than using the ladder.

More information: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has a [public playground safety checklist](#).

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