

Lawn mower injuries often caused by distraction

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Docs offer safety tips to protect fingers, hands and feet.

(HealthDay)—Each summer, lawn mower accidents send countless numbers of people to the emergency room. Mishaps often involve serious injuries to the fingers, hands and feet. Often caused by a moment's distraction, injuries may require a team of specialists and months of reconstructive surgeries—even such as replacing a severed thumb with a big toe—experts warn.

"Too many people are injured each year because of lawn mower-related incidents," Dr. Joshua Jacobs, president of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, said in an AAOS news release. "Many of us underestimate the damage that these powerful machines can cause, but it is imperative that we take the necessary steps to protect ourselves and our families from getting hurt by keeping up to speed on all safety precautions."

Injuries can be prevented if lawn mowers are used properly and certain [safety precautions](#) are taken.

"Lawn mowers are not meant to be toys and are certainly not to be used for joy rides," Dr. Joseph Serletti, president of the American Society for Reconstructive [Microsurgery](#), said in the news release. "Most lawn mower injuries occur when the

operator is distracted momentarily and injuries can range from finger tips to entire hands and feet."

The experts recommended people adhere to the following lawn mower safety tips:

- Only use lawn mowers equipped with a control that stops the mower blade if the blade is elevated.
- Do not allow children younger than 12 to operate a push lawn mower.
- Do not allow children younger than 16 to operate a driving lawn mower.
- Wear sturdy shoes when mowing the lawn, not sandals or sneakers.
- Remove stones, toys and other items from the lawn before mowing to prevent injuries from flying objects.
- Anyone operating or standing near a lawn mower should wear polycarbonate protective glasses or goggles.
- Do not pull lawn mowers backwards or mow in reverse unless absolutely necessary. If the lawn mower is used in reverse, carefully check that no children are in its path.
- Be sure to turn the mower off and wait for the blades to stop moving before removing the grass catcher, unclogging the discharge chute, crossing paths or roads, or making repairs.
- Do not use your hands or feet to remove debris from lawn mowers. Opt for a stick or broom handle instead.
- Do not take children for rides on lawn mowers.
- Make sure children are not in the yard while a lawn mower is being used.
- Drive up and down slopes, not across to prevent a lawn mower from rolling over.
- Properly maintain or service lawn mowers so they are in good working order.

"Every year at this time, children can be seen operating or playing around lawn mowers in unsafe

ways. In thousands of yards, injuries will occur, and a beautiful summer day will become a painful occasion," Thomas McInerney, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said in the release. "We want parents and kids to be more aware of precautions to take so that injuries can be prevented."

Last year in the United States, more than 234,000 people were admitted to the hospital or treated in a clinic or emergency department for lawn mower-related injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

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

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