

School and Public Playspace Resources

Alberta Health Services, Environmental Public Health has developed a resource package to assist in safely operating and maintaining playground areas. The purpose of this package is to help raise awareness of potential playground injuries, reduce the risk of injury, and provide a safe play environment for children.

Along with the information provided below, please review these other documents, available at <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph/Page8302.aspx> beneath **Schools** and **Social Care** headings:

- [Winter Playground Use Advisory for Childcare Operators](#)
- [Age Appropriate Playground Equipment](#)
- [Inspection and Maintenance Program for Playspaces \(with a sample inspection checklist\)](#)
- [Playspace Plan Review Application](#)

What can I do to Ensure a Playground is Safe?

The following actions can reduce the occurrence and severity of injuries related to playground equipment:

- ensure the surfacing is appropriate for the height of the equipment
- inspect and maintain the equipment regularly
- ensure there is adequate supervision and encourage children to use age-appropriate equipment (Parachute Canada, nd, para. 4, Parachute Canada, nd.)
- consult your Public Health Inspector when renovating or constructing a new playground

Why Does Playground Safety Matter?

Being active is important for children's development and well-being. Different playground design and structures such as platforms, slides, and swings provide an opportunity for children to play freely, explore and socialize. Playgrounds are, however, places where serious injury can occur. Injuries can occur within the space itself or from the use of the playground equipment.

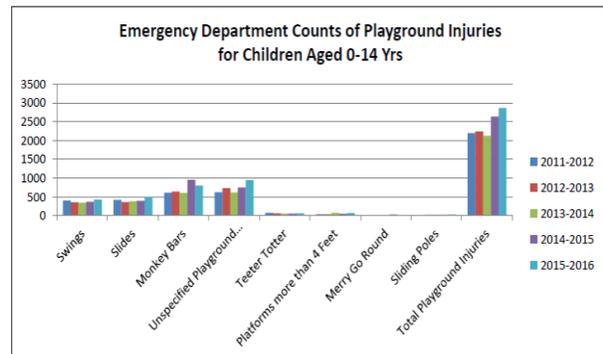
Falls from playground equipment is the most common cause of emergency department visits (Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS), 2012, para. 2). Here are some facts about playground injuries to consider:

General Statistics:

- Approximately 29,000 children under the age of fifteen visit emergency departments for playground-related injuries each year in Canada (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2012, para.2)
- In 2015, there were 2,645 playground injuries that resulted in an Emergency Department visit for Albertan Children aged birth to 14 years (Alberta Health Services, 2016)
- Albertan children ages 5-9 years had the highest rate of playground injuries that led to emergency department visits among all Albertan children less than 18 years of age (Alberta Health Services, 2016)
- Research and data from Canada and the US suggest that injuries are more likely to occur in school playgrounds (Mowat, Wang, Pickett, & Brison, 1998)

Playground Equipment Injuries – Alberta Statistics (AHS, Public Health Surveillance and Infrastructure, 2016)

- Since 2013 playground injuries have increased.
- Between 2015 and 2016 swings, slides and monkey bars account for the majority of injuries.
- A number of injuries, however, are a result of play on “unknown equipment.”



Alberta Health Services, 2016

Should you have any questions, please contact Environmental Public Health at one of the offices listed below. We look forward to working with you.

References

Alberta Health Services, Public Health Surveillance and Infrastructure, (2016).

Canadian Paediatric Society. (2012). Preventing playground injuries. Retrieved from <http://www.cps.ca/documents/position/playground-injuries>

Mowat, D.L., Wang, F., Pickett, W., & Brison, R.J. (1998). A case–control study of risk factors for playground injuries among children in Kingston and area. *Injury Prevention*, 4 (1), 39-43.

Parachute. (n.d.a). Balancing playground benefits and risks. Retrieved from <http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/item/balancing-benefits-and-risks-lt>.

Parachute. (n.d.b). Home playground safety. Retrieved from <http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/item/home-playgrounds>

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office. PUB-0403-201809

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