

Waterloo Fire Rescue

Fire PALS Injury Prevention Program

Playground Safety

Grades K-1

To educate the students about playground safety. To stress the importance of playing on equipment only in the presence of a trusted adult.

Learning Objectives:

At the completion of this unit, 100 percent of the students will be able to:

1. define guidelines for safe play on the playground
2. follow rules for safety on the playground

Time Element:

Knowledge/Attitude: 10 minutes

Activity/Skill: 20 minutes

Background:

Each year in the U.S., more than 200,000 children ages fourteen and under are seen and treated in hospital emergency rooms for playground related injuries. Between 1990 and 2000, 147 children under the age of 12 died as a result of playground related injuries. Of them 56% died from strangulation and 20% died from falls to the playground surface. About 45% of injuries are severe; internal injuries, concussions, fractures, dislocations and amputations. About 75% of nonfatal injuries on playground equipment occur on public playgrounds at schools and daycares.

Children ages 5 to 9 have higher rates of emergency department visits for playground injuries than any other age group. Climbing equipment on public playgrounds is the source of the majority of injuries.

Some studies suggest that playgrounds in low-income areas have more hazards such as trash, rusty play equipment and damaged fall surfaces. (National Center For Disease Control)

Children need to be taught to play appropriately on playground equipment and to be aware of dangers associated with playground equipment and risky behaviors. Schools and Daycare Centers should follow safe playground guidelines set by The University of Northern Iowa's National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS). Children should never be unsupervised while playing on the playground whether before school, during or after school hours. Adult supervision is essential for playground safety.

Introduction/Content

I. What is playground safety?

A. Say to the students, “Today we are going to talk about a very important safety topic, playground safety. Who can tell me what playground safety is? Why should you care about playground safety? Have you or somebody you know ever been hurt on the playground?” After the students have responded, say, “Playground injuries are very common. Everyday children across the country are hurt on the playground. Each year thousands of kids get hurt badly enough to need medical attention. The tips that I share with you today are intended to help you stay safe on the playground. We do not want any of you to be hurt badly by not following some simple playground rules.”

B. Share with the students the following playground safety tips:

(If weather permitting and you have cleared it with the classroom teacher ahead of time, hold this discussion outside on the playground. As you walk around each area explain the important safety tips.)

- **Play responsibly.** Do not play tag on the equipment.
- **Climbing Safety:** Use both hands when you climb. Climb only on dry equipment. You could fall if it is wet. Do not climb on the outside of equipment.
- **Safety on Slides:** Never climb up the front of the slide. Someone may slide down and hit you. Do not slide headfirst. Your feet should arrive at the bottom of the slide before the rest of you. Only one person should slide down at a time.
- **Safety on Swings:** Sit down while you swing. Slow down before you get off of a swing. Do not jump off of the swing while you are in midair. Do not walk near someone who is swinging. They could hit you and knock you over.
- **Make sure to remove items such as a bike helmet, wrist and knee or elbow pads when playing on equipment.** These could actually increase your risk of getting an injury on a playground.
- **Do not go to a playground alone.** An adult should always be watching you when you play outside.
- **Check the playground for soft surfacing.** Surfaces such as hardwood fiber/mulch, pea gravel, sand and rubber mats will cushion falls. Do not play on equipment that is surfaced underneath with concrete, asphalt, grass or blacktop.
- **Do not throw rocks or woodchips on playground equipment.** Someone could trip or fall on them.
- **If equipment is rusted, chipped or broken, tell an adult and don’t play on it until it is fixed.**

- **On warm days, have an adult do a temperature test on equipment before you play on it.** If it is hot to the touch, do not play on it. You could be scalded or burned.
- **Practice good fashion sense.** Loose clothing or anything that hangs or dangles, can easily become tangled on playground equipment. Wear clothes that fit properly, allowing for a full range of motion. Make sure that coats, jackets, sweaters and sweatshirts do not contain neck drawstrings. Remove them from all outerwear to decrease the chance of strangulation. Wear shoes to protect feet and keep shoelaces tied. Shoes should fit well. Shoes that are too big could slip off and cause you to lose your balance.
- **Respect yourself and others.** Take turns and share. Be kind with your words and actions so that everyone playing can feel safe.
- **Help keep the playground clean.** Do not litter, pick up any trash you see and throw it in the garbage, never damage equipment by writing on it with markers, crayons or pens.
- **When at school, line up immediately after hearing the bell ring or the whistle blow.** Follow your school guidelines for lining up. Make sure that you don't push or shove other children while standing in line.

II. After the “Walk and Safety talk” on the playground is finished, tell the students that you and their teacher are going to let them play on the equipment for a few minutes while they practice the safety tips they learned. Tell them that you will be observing to make sure that they practice all of the rules for safety that you discussed. Walk around and positively reinforce the students as they are playing.

Home/School Connection

Letter home to parents explaining the importance of adult supervision to reinforce playground safety rules as children play on playground equipment.