

Avoid using home trampolines, Academy says

The sight of a backyard trampoline will make most children want to jump for joy. But trampoline injury statistics might make well-meaning parents and gym teacher bounce back into reality: In 1996, there were 83,400 trampoline-related injuries, a 140 percent increase over the 1990 rate, according to the May Pediatrics.



With trampoline injuries skyrocketing, the American Academy of Pediatrics has reaffirmed an earlier statement that trampolines never should be used in the home environment (inside or out), in routine gym classes, or on outdoor playgrounds. The Academy also issued recommendations for limited specialized use by athletic trainers and others.

As trampolines grow in popularity (May is the peak month for sales), related injuries result in more emergency room visits, with 66 percent of victims ages 5 through 14 years old. About 10 percent are 4 years or younger.

Most injuries occur on home trampolines from falls sustained on and off the equipment, especially multiple users. Children also can land incorrectly while jumping, become injured while performing stunts, or collide with other users. In addition, most accidents involved relatively new full-size trampolines, with girls and boys affected equally. In addition, warning labels, public education and adult supervision don't prevent injuries, according to a July 1998 article in Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

Data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance system (1991 to 1996) and other registries revealed this pattern of trampoline injuries:

- 45 percent involved the lower extremities (legs, feet), mostly in the form of strains or sprains
- 30 percent affected the upper extremities (arms, hands), usually as fractures
- 14 percent were to the head or face, usually lacerations.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission reported six trampoline-related deaths since 1990, with victims ranging from age 3 to 21 years. Most deaths occurred after the victims fell from the trampolines and incurred injuries related to the cervical spinal cord.

In addition to coping with the potential for serious injury, parents who purchase trampolines are finding that what they thought was a healthy backyard toy also may carry increased homeowner liability risks, as neighborhood children gather to join in the "fun". Parents are advised to contact their home owner insurance carrier to question whether additional coverage or policy rider is needed.



Courtesy of Pediatrics West.
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