How safe is your playground?

Every year, about 200,000 injuries and about 13 deaths occur on playgrounds in the U.S. Here are some guidelines that can help you make sure a child you know isn’t one of them.

SURFACES
■ At least 12 inches of loose fill is under and around play equipment. Suitable playground fills include wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubberlike materials.
■ Protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, protective surfacing should extend twice the height of the suspending bar in front and back of where the swing hangs when not in use.

HAZARDS
■ No dangerous hardware is present. This could include worn or open “S” hooks or protruding bolt ends.
■ No spaces that could trap/endanger children are present. This could include openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs that measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
■ No sharp points or edges are present.
■ No tripping hazards, such as exposed concrete footings, tree stumps or rocks, are nearby.

HEIGHTS
■ Playground equipment of more than 30 inches high is spaced at least 9 feet apart.
■ Raised platforms and ramps have guardrails (29 inches high for preschool, 38 inches for school-age).

SLIDES
■ No gaps exist between slide and platform.
■ The slide has a bar at the top so kids have to sit down.
■ There is no place for drawstrings to get caught along the path of the slide.

SWINGS
■ Seats are flexible. Metal or wooden seats on swings should be replaced.
■ Swings are far enough from other equipment that other children won’t be hit.
■ A space of 24 inches is between swings.
■ Young children are provided full bucket seats. Half seats won’t hold them in.

SEESAWS
■ Seesaws hit a tire or some other cushion instead of the ground.

CLIMBING EQUIPMENT
■ Children younger than five are advised to stay off climbing equipment.
■ Double-check that shock-absorbing surfaces are present under monkey bars, which cause many injuries each year.
■ Climbing ropes are secured at the top and bottom.

MAINTENANCE & SUPERVISION
■ Playgrounds are regularly inspected to ensure that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
■ Children are supervised. Playgrounds should be well-lit and designed so adults easily can observe children at play.

SUN EXPOSURE
■ Metal play equipment needs to be out of the direct sun. Sun exposure on bare metal slides, platforms, steps and surfaces can burn children.

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVENESS
■ Some play equipment is adapted for people with disabilities. An adaptive swing is a good start.
■ Adapted play equipment is accessible by a 60-inch-wide pathway made of a rubber or rubberlike mat.
■ Equipment is provided for both younger and older children, and the equipment is labeled to guide supervising adults.