

Playing It Safe with Play Equipment¹

Donna Davis²



Figure 1.
Credits: Hemera

Raising my rough-and-tumble children at times took superhuman energy, patience, and constant supervision. Even the joyful vision of a playground could be daunting when the swing was used as a human slingshot and the slide had 101 uses, of which only one was acceptable. I'm sure many parents can relate to the fear of the unknown dangers on the playground.

According to the Consumer Federation of America, "each year approximately 50,000 children are injured seriously enough to require a visit to a hospital emergency room, and four children die on home playground equipment." Almost 70% of all of these injuries are due to falls (CFA, 2012). How can you protect your children while they frolic on outdoor play equipment?

The CFA offers several recommendations. One is to make sure children are cushioned when they land. For example, grass and dirt are not adequate surfaces for play areas, as they become hard. Find or build playgrounds with mulch, shredded rubber, or synthetic surfaces to help buffer those falls. Swing injuries occur when children are hit with hard seats or when swing sets tip over. Be sure to purchase swings that are lightweight and flexible and make certain that the swing set is properly and adequately anchored. Also, avoid swings with horizontal climbing ladders overhead, as climbers tend to fall on the swingers below (CFA, 2012).

Most important, supervise your children. Even the safest equipment can be used unsafely when those supersonic ninjas are in action!

Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life. "Family Album" is a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at <http://www.familyalbumradio.org>.

To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/449.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/449.wav

1. This document is FAR0086, one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Broadcast as program 449. Created June 2006. Published on EDIS July 2012. In the interest of time and/or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Donna Davis, senior producer, Family Album Radio, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Reference

Consumer Federation of America (CFA). “Home Play Equipment: Safety Tips for Buying and Using.” [accessed April 18, 2012] <http://www.consumerfed.org/elements/www.consumerfed.org/file/health/cfa.pdf>