

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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Backyard Safety for Children

Playing outside is important as it helps a child's development and well-being. It also provides exercise. Watching your child while they are playing in the backyard is important, because backyards can be full of dangers. You can prevent injuries by making sure the yard is safe for kids.

Did you know?

- Falls are the leading cause of playground injuries. Falls from high places and onto hard surfaces can cause serious injuries.
- Strangulation is the most common cause of playground death.
- Children are attracted to fire, and summer brings an increase in burn injuries from outdoor grills.
- Almost all trampoline injuries to children involve backyard trampolines.

Managing the risks

Dangers in the backyard may involve play equipment, swimming pools, barbecues, lawnmowers, and poisonings.

Proper supervision, safe environments, hazard awareness, and participating in age-appropriate activities all help reduce the risk of injury to children in their own or in someone else's backyard.

Supervising a child during play can help prevent injury. Supervision is recommended until the child reaches 12 years of age.

- Always have a responsible person watching young children while they play in the backyard.
- Watch children play on backyard playgrounds. Be physically near them while they use play equipment or are near or in pools or hot tubs.
- Stay close enough that you can take action if needed. Stay alert, pay close attention, and anticipate hazards

Survey the Yard

- Make sure all fence gates are self-closing and self-latching.
- Have a fence separate the play area from the driveway and garage.
- Block all balcony stairs with gates that self-close and lock.

Trampolines

Do not use backyard trampolines. Jumping on the trampoline is a high risk activity with the potential for significant injury to children and youth. Alberta Health Services and The Canadian Pediatric Society recommend that parents not buy or use trampolines at home (including cottages and summer residences) for children and youth.

The risk of the trampoline is in the use of the trampoline. Parents may think that safety nets, most often sold with trampolines to prevent people from falling off, will reduce this risk, but in reality, fewer than 30 per cent of trampoline injuries are caused by children falling off the trampoline.

Sandboxes

- Check sandboxes regularly to make sure they are in good repair, with no protruding nails or splintered wood.
- A sandbox cover is recommended, especially if pets roam freely in your neighbourhood.
- Cover the sandbox at night.

Lawn Sprinklers/Water Slides

- Use only on grass.
- Make sure the area is free of obstacles and debris.
- Teach children to slide sitting up and not to walk or run on water slides.