



## Have Fun and Play Safe at the Playground

Playgrounds are a great place for children to be active. It can also be a place where children get hurt. Falls are the number one cause of injury at the playground for children up to the age of nine.

Children under the age of five get hurt because they:

- Are still developing their balancing and climbing skills.
- Have bodies that are top-heavy and are more likely to lose their balance.
- Are easily distracted.
- Don't understand danger.

Children between five and nine get hurt because they:

- Act before they think.
- Are easily distracted.
- Forget safety rules when having fun.
- Think they can do anything.
- Don't always see the danger in their actions.

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit has developed resources that teach children simple playground safety rules.

The Have Fun and Play Safe at the Playground Teaching Guide includes:

- A Have Fun and Play Safe at the Playground DVD.
- Classroom activities for Preschool-SK and Grade 2 children.
- Stickers to reinforce safe play on the playground.
- Parent Activity Guides for Preschool-SK and Grade 2 children.

Local daycare providers, Ontario Early Years Centres, and Parent and Family Literacy Centres will be receiving a free copy of the guide in April 2009. The information is also available on-line at:

[www.wechealthunit.org/  
playground-safety](http://www.wechealthunit.org/playground-safety).



## Healthy Bodies Summer is Coming!

Unfortunately, hot weather often brings smog with it. Smog is a mixture of pollutants, gases like ozone, and small particles that are dangerous to breathe. Young children are particularly at risk from smog because:

- Young children breathe faster than adults so they take in more air pollution.
- Infant and toddler lungs are still developing and are more sensitive to pollutants.

When a smog alert is issued, avoid outdoor activities and stay in an air conditioned room. If you must take the children outside:

- Limit activities to the morning when pollution levels are lower.
- Avoid or reduce activities near heavy traffic, especially during rush hour.
- Monitor children with asthma. They may react to pollution at levels below the smog alert.

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy provides reports on air quality. For more information, subscribe to the Smog Alert Network <http://www.airqualityontario.com/alerts/signoff.cfm>.

## Healthy Learning

# Learning Through Play

As early childhood educators, you play an important role in guiding the way children play. Children engage in longer, more complex play when teachers get involved. Play helps children explore and discover the world and their role in it. It also helps children learn new ideas, solve problems, and interact with others.

Here are few a ways you can stimulate and guide play:

- Allow long blocks of time for free play.
- Provide a variety of materials to stimulate different kinds of play.
- Provide activities that challenge children.
- Engage with the children, but let them lead the play.
- Ask open-ended questions about the things children are playing with.
- Encourage pretend play, it helps children learn and solve problems.

For more information on learning through play, try out the following websites:

Canadian Council on Learning:

<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/LessonsInLearning/LinL20061010LearninPlay.htm>

Ministry of Ontario Kindergarten Curriculum

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/kindercurrb.pdf>

## Healthy Growth and Development

### Helping Develop Gross Motor Skills

Children develop gross motor skills through activities that move large muscle groups, such as the arms and legs. The playground is a great place for children to learn and practice gross motor skills. Why not design a playground obstacle course? For example, encourage four to five-year-old children to:

1. Walk backwards or sideways to the slide.
2. Climb up the stairs and go down the slide.
3. Hop on one foot to a basketball area.
4. Throw a basketball into a large basket or hoop.
5. Skip from the basketball area to the soccer area.

The Nipissing District Development Screens (NDDS) can help you design an obstacle course specific to your children's age groups. One section of the NDDS helps parents and childcare providers assess how children are developing. The other section provides activities to promote normal development. The NDDS can be downloaded free from <http://ndds.ca/ontario/home.html>.



## Upcoming EVENTS

### KIDestrians!

Check out the new resource, **KIDestrian** online under Early Learning Professionals.

**KIDestrian** is a step-by-step guide to teach children traffic safety rules. This guide has 12 different exercises. Here are a few examples:

- **KID BRAKES:** Stopping before the edge of the sidewalk at all times.
- Making "Stop, Look, Listen" a habit.
- Crossing at intersections with traffic lights.

### Workshops

For a list of upcoming workshops visit [www.offtoagreatstart.org](http://www.offtoagreatstart.org).

### Do you have questions you'd like answered?

For more information contact the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.

Phone: 519-258-2146 ext. 1350 (Intake Nurse)

Website: [www.offtoagreatstart.org](http://www.offtoagreatstart.org)

Address: 1005 Ouellette Ave.  
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Share this information with your parents.