

# Let's Play!

## 7 Tips for Backyard Playground Safety



### Playground Rules To Teach Your Children

- Never stand or kneel in the swing, and hold tightly with both hands.
- Always stop swinging before getting off the swing.
- Only one person should be in one swing at a time.
- Do not push anyone else in the swing or let others push you (that's a job for grown-ups).
- Don't swing empty swings, and never twist swing chains.

Source: [swingsetsource.com](http://swingsetsource.com)

### 1. Plan Ahead

One of the best ways to stay safe is to start with some careful planning. Think about the space where you'll place the play equipment, your child's age, even where the sun will be shining. An article on the [naturalhandyman.com](http://naturalhandyman.com) suggests, "Make sure toddler swing sets are at least 2 feet above ground (so kids can't use it on their own), at least 6 feet away from any building or fences, and in a shaded area, so that surfaces won't get too hot to the touch."

### 2. Avoid Pressure Treated Wood

Never construct or buy playground equipment made with pressure-treated wood containing chromated copper arsenate, also known as CCA. You'll know pressure treated wood by its greenish tint. There are other chemicals that can be used to treat wood, but they are still rare and more expensive, so CCA has been the principal chemical used to pressure treat wood. Good alternatives include untreated woods like cedar or redwood, and non-wood alternatives such as plastics, metal, and composite materials (like Trex).

### 3. Inspect Your Equipment

Always check the play equipment for any sharp points or edges (screws that stick out, splinters, rough wood, etc.). Check the equipment often as its condition can change. Make sure equipment is firmly anchored in the ground.

### 4. Bigger Is Not Always Better

While we may be dreaming of a large play-scape to really wow our kids, remember the higher the equipment the harder the fall. Research shows equipment taller than 6 feet doubles the possibility of injury.

### 5. Avoid Dangerous Sand

Not all play sand is safe. In fact, the soft, fine sand that is marketed as "play sand," is one some say we should avoid. According to [safemama.com](http://safemama.com) play sand is sometimes made of crushed rock instead of beach or river sand. This crushed rock or crystalline silica is a known carcinogen according to the EPA and OSHA. Some brands of sand even contain asbestos tremloite which can put you and kids at risk of lung cancer. Avoid play sand that creates airborne dust that can be easily breathed by kids. Read up on Sandtasktic or SafeSand as possible alternatives, as those brands are silica and quartz-free.

### 6. Create a Cushion

Falls account for nearly 80 percent of playground injuries. Be sure to use proper ground cover for under play equipment to prevent this. Ground cover includes sand, pea gravel, rubber, or wood chips. Donna Thompson, Ph.D., and Director of the National Program for Playground Safety, recommends that the cushion be a minimum of 12 inches deep in order to be effective. "Many people use the right materials, but not enough to truly cushion a fall," she says.

### 7. Practice Basic Safety

Children under 3 should be in toddler swings with support on all sides and safety straps and children under 6 should never play unattended. Those older than 6 should be checked on frequently.