

# Back To School Safety



**Back to school? Time for a safety check. Use this list to prevent your kids from harm at school, at home, and at play.**

## Playgrounds

Each year, more than 200,000 kids are treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms for playground-associated injuries. Most of these injuries occur when a child falls from the equipment. Take a look at the surfaces of your local playground. There should be a 12-inch depth of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel, or mats made of safety-tested rubber or fiber material. (This surface will prevent possible head injuries in case a child falls.) Here are more tips for checking the safety of public playgrounds.

## Bike Helmets

Since a growing number of kids are riding their bikes to school, make sure your kids always wear their helmets. All bike helmets manufactured or sold in the U.S. are required to meet federal safety standards. Helmet use can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85 percent. There is one exception: Kids shouldn't wear bike helmets when playing -- especially on playground equipment.

## Weigh the Risks of Backpacks

If your kids are carrying too much weight on their backs and shoulders, they may stretch or strain their muscles, cause direct injury to the spine, and, frankly, get really pooped.

Kids shouldn't carry more than 10 to 15 percent of their weight over their shoulders and on their backs.

Decrease their risk of injury with these tips from Dr. Hank Bernstein of Boston's Children's Hospital:

- Help your child sort through everything before packing up and see what can be left home that day. Place heaviest items in first; the closer they are to a child's back, the less strain they'll put on those muscles.
- Buy an appropriate-size backpack, one that ends just a few inches above the waist. Use a backpack that has soft, padded straps to maximize comfort.
- Look for a pack with compartments that help distribute the weight. Or, try one of the new models with wheels, that your child can pull.
- Even though it's hipper to carry a pack over just one shoulder, encourage your kids to carry theirs over both shoulders. This will better distribute the weight.
- Make sure your kids bend their knees when they first lift their packs, to avoid further strain on their back muscles.



Source: <http://school.familyeducation.com>

**Courtesy of Wellness Proposals**