



Backyard Safety

The most common place for childhood injury is in and around the home. Many of these injuries can occur in the backyard and garden.

The home yard or garden area is the most common location within the home setting that children are sustaining injuries.

The majority of these presentations are children in the 0 to 4 years age group. Nearly half of all backyard injuries are from falls.



How can you make your backyard Kidsafe?

1. Look for dangers in the backyard. This fact sheet will help you become more aware of these hazards.
2. Decide what to do about the hazard or danger. What you do about it will depend on just how dangerous it is, how it can be changed and what kind of problem it is for your child.
3. Make changes so that the hazard is no longer dangerous.

Age does matter

A backyard that is safe for a twelve year old can be very unsafe for a toddler. Children under five have little awareness of danger. They are very curious but they don't always realise the dangers. Often they need to be supervised whilst they are playing.

Older children are far more likely to recognize the dangers around them but still get injured. They want to explore, play sport or ride bikes. They need to be given limits and safety guidelines.

Older children should not be expected to be responsible for looking after younger siblings. At the same time, older children need to be aware of what is dangerous for younger children. They need to be told:

- Make sure that the gate to a swimming pool is properly closed every time.
- Take away ladders from cubbies or tree houses so that younger children can't climb up.
- Clear away toys and other equipment that are not in use.

Safe Place to Play

A Kidsafe backyard is a place where there are plenty of child friendly things to do, but without major hazards.

Children need a safe place to play that is fenced off:

- From the driveway.
- From the pool.
- From any steps or stairs in the garden or around a veranda.
- From animals that might harm them.

Fences should be well maintained and without gaps or sharp edges. Children also need an area that is open and clear of obstacles.

Play Equipment

Backyard play equipment should be sturdy, strong and well-maintained. It should also:

- Suit the age and size of the child. Young children should be supervised on play equipment.
- Have a suitable impact absorbing surface under and around play equipment.
- Be checked regularly for wear, tear and safety hazards.
- Have no sharp edges, pieces that can come loose, no openings or moving parts that can trap or injure children.
- Use sports equipment which suits their age and size, and wear appropriate protective gear such as helmets and knee pads.
- Trampolines should have padding around the frame and over the springs. Teach children to jump in the centre of the mat and only allow one child on at a time (AS 4989:2010).
- Choose toys that are suitable for the child's age and size, including bikes. Clear away toys when they are not being used.

Motors off

Never leave motors of any kind switched on and unsupervised when children are around. That includes:

- Cars in the driveway or in the garage: Turn off and lock vehicles; take the key out of the ignition; and always know where your children are around cars.
- Lawn mowers and other garden equipment.
- Electrical equipment.



Safe Storage

The everyday backyard has items such as chemicals, poisons, garden materials, tools and machinery which can be dangerous for young children. They must be locked away securely. Safe storage means:

- A lockable garage or shed with high inaccessible storage areas.
- All locks and catches should be child-resistant.
- Ladders stored out of children's reach.
- Swimming pools and spas must be fenced with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- Poisons stored both locked away and up high in their original containers.



Water Safety

- Restrict access with isolation fencing around a pool or spa with a self-latching and self-closing gate.
- Always watch your child in and around water.
- Learn what to do in an emergency: basic first aid and resuscitation.
- Put strong mesh over ponds and pooled water in water features – strong enough to take a child's weight.
- Empty containers such as buckets and wading pools when not in use. A child can drown silently in as little as 5cm of water.

Eating Outdoors

Outdoor eating often means barbeques, parties and social eating. Barbeques can be dangerous:

- Flammable liquids should never be used to light any fire.
- Always watch children around barbeques to prevent burns from hot metal, flames or spitting oils and fats.
- Always turn off the gas and disconnect the bottle when not in use.
- Keep matches out of children's reach.

Safe in the Sun

Children need to be protected from the sun, too much sun during childhood can cause skin cancer as they get older. To stay safe in the sun:

- Stay out of the sun during the hottest times of the day, generally between 10am and 3pm.
- Have a good shade area in the backyard so that children can play out of the sun.
- Use clothing that provides protection from the sun. Broad-brimmed or legionnaire style hats and clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Cotton and lycra can have good sun protective properties.
- Use an SPF 30+ sunscreen on parts of the body that are exposed to the sun.

Dogs in the Backyard

Dogs can be wonderful pets however they are responsible for some serious injuries to young children. Often injuries are to the child's head and face.

Always supervise children around dogs and teach them how to safely interact with all animals.

Work and play

Children get injured when adults are working in the backyard. So:

- Keep the toolbox out of reach
- Keep the workbench clear
- Keep caps and lids on all containers
- Keep children separate from the work activity.

A farm is a home but it is also a busy and dangerous workplace. It is important children on farms also have a safe backyard.

- Provide a safe place to play, next to the house and fenced off from water, farm animals and machinery.
- Supervise young children and always know where they are.

For more detail on any of the individual injury topics identified on this Fact Sheet, refer to the individual injury topic Fact Sheets available at www.kidsafewa.com.au

Kidsafe WA © 2023

Excerpts may be copied for educational purposes.

Written permission is required to copy this fact sheet in its entirety.

For more information
Poisons Information Centre

(08) 6244 4880
13 11 26