



PLAYGROUND SAFETY DURING WARM WEATHER

Playground materials can become dangerously hot when exposed to the sun. This happens even when outdoor temperatures are in the 70s. Playground equipment can get hot enough from direct sun exposure to cause serious burns to children.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) [Public Playground Safety Handbook](#), children received burns from metal, non-metal, and plastic surfaces. This includes slides, platforms, steps, and other parts of playground equipment.

CHILDREN ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO HEAT

Warm weather can lead to serious health and safety concerns for children. They are more sensitive and vulnerable to hot environments compared to adults. Children have thinner skin that can burn more easily. They are also more prone to dehydration and heat-related symptoms.

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS AND PREVENTION

Recognize the signs of heat illnesses. This includes flushed skin, dizziness, headache, fatigue, weakness, and muscle cramps. See the [EPA website](#) to learn how to protect children from extreme heat.

Important health and safety tips:

- Adult playground supervisors should use the back of their hand to touch playground equipment to ensure surfaces are not hot. See the [CPSC fact sheet](#) on burn safety awareness on playgrounds.
- Protect children's skin from sun exposure during school outdoor activities. See the [CDC website](#) to learn more about sun safety.
- Avoid or limit outdoor activities when the sun is strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Consider moving outdoor time to a cooler time of the day.
- Give breaks for children to get water and reapply sunscreen.
- Children should wear appropriate clothing such as shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Burns have occurred from running across surfaces barefoot.
- Encourage lightweight and light-colored clothing.

PLAYGROUND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Adequate shade may limit surface heat, help keep children cool, and protect children's skin from the sun. Consider materials when constructing playground shade.



Tips for playground maintenance and design:

- Add shading to protect playgrounds and nearby areas from direct sunlight. Materials can include specialized shade fabric or hardtop structures made from wood, metal, or plastic.
- If shading the playground is not practical, try providing a nearby shaded area for children to rest.
- Trees can provide shading but may need extra playground maintenance.
- Place warning signs that show play equipment exposed to the sun can cause burns.
- Some playground surface materials offer less protection from injury during high heat. Research surface material performance. Ensure it can still provide the same level of protection from head injury in warm weather.
- Use materials that reduce the surface temperature, like plastic or coated metal.
- Maintain equipment. Look for areas where the protective coating may be missing or peeling.
- If possible, use lighter colors for playground equipment to reduce heat absorption.
- Consider the orientation or direction of the playground equipment to reduce sun exposure. See the CPSC [Public Playground Safety Handbook](#).
- Ensure shade materials and structural supports meet the standards in ASTM F1487-25. Verify that obstructions and clearances from designated play surfaces, use zones, and playground equipment meet requirements.
- Check with your local building authority and health department before adding new playground features, including shading.