

October 1, 2012

Living Well

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Playground Safety

Many children love to play outside. It is a wonderful place to test one's physical abilities and to just have fun. Keep the following safety tips in mind the next time you and your children spent time at the playground.

***Provide supervision.** Adult presence is needed to watch for potential hazards, observe, intercede, and facilitate play when necessary. Strings on clothing or ropes used for play can cause accidental strangulation, if caught on equipment.

***Remember that children are developmentally different.** The abilities and needs of children vary from those aged two to five and those aged five to twelve. It is important to make sure children are utilizing playground equipment that is appropriate for their age.

***Check to make sure the playground surface is cushioned.** Nearly 70 percent of all playground injuries are related to falls to the surface. Materials such as sand, pea gravel, rubber mulch, or wood chips should be placed under playground equipment. Playground surfaces made of concrete, asphalt, packed dirt, or grass may not be soft enough to absorb the shock of a fall.

***Inspect equipment to make sure it is safe.** Check to make sure the equipment is anchored safely in the ground, all equipment pieces are in good working order, S-hooks are entirely closed, bolts are tight and not protruding, etc. Also, make sure shade is provided in the

play area from natural sources like trees or from an awning to prevent burns – especially for metal equipment such as slides.

***Check the play area for safety.** Make sure trash, sharp branches, animal feces, and unsafe foreign objects such as broken glass are removed from the play area. Also, be aware of weather conditions and the people around your children.

***Teach children outdoor safety rules.** Teach children to use playground equipment safely and remind them to stay in designated play areas.

As you and your children spend time together at the playground this fall, remember to take precautions to reduce the risk for potential accidents. For more information, contact the Flint Hills Extension District office in Council Grove at (620) 767-5136 or the office in Cottonwood Falls at (620) 273-6491.