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Trampoline Safety

Trampolines are the latest craze among children in the UK – the must-have toy for the summer. They have the bonus of being of form of healthy exercise as well as being great fun. Widely available from DIY stores and garden centres, they are reportedly the third most wanted gift for children aged five to 13.

But as they literally spring up in gardens around the country, parents under pressure from their children to acquire one should stop and think before they rush off to the shops. Not all gardens will be suitable for a trampoline, and it's always best to consider the safety implications before making an expensive purchase.

The current boom in trampolining is almost certain to lead to an increase in accidents, but that does not mean that parents should not buy trampolines for their children. Play often leads to children being hurt – it is part of growing up. There are bound to be the odd bumps and bruises. Trampolining can be enjoyed safely if a few simple guidelines are followed.

Safety Issues

The latest accident figures available are for 2002 and these showed 11,500 people in the UK going to hospital after an accident with a trampoline – an increase of more than 50 per cent over a five-year period. Accidents on trampolines at home had increased almost fourfold in the same time, with 4,200 under-15s being hurt in 2002. The growing popularity of the sport also saw injuries rise to 6,700 in places such as sports halls and gymnasias, but at nowhere near the same rate as those at home. **The key safety issues are as follows:**

- Approximately **75% of injuries occur** when **more than one person** is on the trampoline. The person **weighing less is five times more likely to be injured.**
- **Children under six** years old are particularly **vulnerable to injury.**
- Injuries can occur to all parts of the body, including the neck, arms, legs face and head. **Head and neck injuries are the most serious** injuries associated with trampolines.
- **Adult supervision is no guarantee of safety.** More than half of all trampoline accidents occur whilst under supervision. However a trained 'spotter' can greatly reduce this risk.

Read on for some simple safety advice for parents and children

Advice for parents

Purchase

- **Buy safety pads**, or ensure that the model comes with safety pads that completely cover the springs, hooks and the frame. The pad should be a contrasting colour to the mat.
- Consider models that have **safety netting as part of the design**, or purchase a safety cage when you buy the trampoline this will reduce the chance of your child falling off the trampoline and striking the ground.
- All commercial trampolines manufactured from 2001 should meet **BS EN 13219:2001 Trampolines**. However there is no similar standard for domestic, home and garden trampolines.

Positioning

- **Choose a clear area**, which is **clear from hazards** such as trees, fences, washing lines, poles or other equipment. Ideally there should be a **safe fall zone** completely around the trampoline of at least **2.5 metres**. This should also include bikes, skateboards and other toys that could be a hazard.
- **Place the trampoline** on soft **energy absorbing** ground (i.e. soft and springy lawn or bark wood chip, sand or cushioning materials).
- **Never** place the trampoline on a **hard surface** (i.e. concrete, hard packed mud) without some form of **crash matting or safety netting**.
- **Never use a ladder** with the trampoline because it provides **unsupervised access** to small children.

Storage

It is important that a trampoline is stored safely when not in use, particularly during winter months when the wind can force a trampoline to become airborne:

- **Tie down** large trampolines – there are tether kits available that can be used for this purpose.
- **Flip upside down** smaller rectangular trampolines.
- **Remove safety netting** from enclosure/cage frames to reduce the sail-like qualities of the cages during windy weather.

Using the trampoline

- **Never allow more than one** person on the trampoline at the same time.
- **Children under 6 must only use trampolines designed for their age range and size**, trampolines are not suitable for very young children and toddlers.
- **Always supervise** children.
- **No somersaults** - go to a properly organised club if you want to try more complicated moves.
- **Never allow the use of bouncing to exit** the trampoline.



Leisure Safety..... Information

Rules for children

- **My turn!** One person at a time, at all times.
- **No somersaults!** Don't try risky stunts like somersaults and flips.
- **Always bounce in the middle** of the trampoline.
- **Never jump off!** You could hurt yourself by jumping off the trampoline onto the ground. To get off, stop bouncing and then climb down.
- **Stand back!** Keep away from the trampoline when someone else is jumping.
- **Watch out underneath!** Never go under the trampoline when someone else is jumping.
- **Out of bounds!** Don't use the trampoline if you see a rip or split in the mat, or if the padding has come away from the metal springs. Tell an adult.

Other information

RoSPA has also produced with the help of British Gymnastics, a fact sheet aimed at commercial users of trampolines. This can be found on the play safety pages on RoSPA's website at www.rospace.com/playsafety/info/34_trampoline.htm.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is a registered charity, which was established over 80 years ago. **RoSPA's mission is to save lives and reduce injuries.** More information can be found on www.rospace.com or by email at help@rospace.com.

The British Gymnastics Association has further information on the use of trampolines on their website. They also run Gym Mark that accredits safe and effective clubs. More information can be sought from www.british-gymnastics.org.

The Sport England lists clubs and facilities where you can take your child to take part in sport. More information can be found at www.sportengland.org.