New Play Equipment Standards for Infants, Toddlers and Twos

In 2005, the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) published a new standard for play equipment for children less than two years of age. Prior standards were for children two to twelve years of age. First, a committee studied factors that affect safety during active play for children under two. The committee reviewed playground injury data. Also, they examined how the size, strength and ability to solve problems of this age group might affect injury risks. They found that the playground safety measures that very young children need are vastly different from those required for children aged two to twelve.

The new standard is “ASTM F2373-05 Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Public Use Play Equipment for Children 6 Months through 23 Months.” Differences from the standard for older children include:

- The standard handles supervised settings differently from unsupervised settings, and recognizes how supervision can affect safety.
- Caregivers need access to children under two years of age at all times. Therefore the standard restricts the height of play equipment to allow for access.
- Children under two years of age use gross motor play equipment both indoors and outside. Therefore the standard addresses the use of play equipment in both settings.
- Infants, toddlers and twos have very limited problem solving abilities. Therefore, the standard requires protection of children from situations where they would have to choose to avoid a hazard.
- Children under two years of age are much smaller than children aged two to twelve.

Therefore, in supervised settings, the standard requires a fall zone around equipment that is much smaller than that required for older children.
- Children under two years of age have very limited upper body strength. Since they cannot climb over barriers on the sides of platforms, the new standard has less stringent requirements for fall zone surfacing than the standard for children two to twelve years of age.
- Many children under two years of age crawl and negotiate their environment in a prone rather than a standing position. Therefore the standard requires the size of spaces such as platforms to be larger than would be required for children who usually move around standing up.
- Infants, toddlers and two year old children sometimes use equipment that does not require permanent anchoring to the floor or ground. Therefore, the standard includes provisions for portable equipment. Unanchored equipment must meet tests to limit the risk of tip-over injuries.

ASTM Standard F2373-05 is a fifty page, technical standard. It guides manufacturers, designers and users of settings and play equipment settings to support young children’s need to play actively while protecting them from hazards. Before buying play equipment for children ages 6-23 months, early care and education providers should require a document from the equipment manufacturer that states that their equipment meets ASTM Standard F2373-05.

For more about the new standard, go to www.astm.org

Contributed by Elizabeth Caesar, MEd., CPSI (Certified Playground Safety Inspector)
USDA’s MyPyramid

(The second in a series of three articles)

By Elise Gurgevich, Ph.D., MPH, Penn State Nutrition Links State Coordinator, Penn State Cooperative Extension

Personalized for YOU

In 2005, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) changed from the Food Guide Pyramid (FGP) to the new “MyPyramid: Steps to A Healthier You.” MyPyramid is a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The new MyPyramid interactive website (www.MyPyramid.gov) allows you to insert information about you or someone in your care. Then you get specific recommendations just for that person.

Each of the triangles in the new pyramid represents a food group. From left to right … grains, vegetables, fruits, oils, milk, meat & beans. How much of each food group a specific person should eat depends on that person’s age, gender and activity level.

Activity

The person climbing the steps on the logo of MyPyramid shows the importance of being active. Everyone needs 30 to 60 minutes of exercise on most days of the week — unless your usual day includes vigorous activity, like digging ditches. Activity lowers the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer. To lose weight or keep weight off, everyone needs 90 minutes of modest exercise every day.

Moderation

The food group triangles that make up the MyPyramid logo are wider at the bottom and get narrower as they go up to the tip of the pyramid. The wider base of the pyramid represents foods with little or no solid fats or added sugar. You should choose these foods more often.

The narrow top area represents foods within each group that contain more added sugars and solid fats. For example, for grains, cooked plain oatmeal is at the base, and then at the narrower part, you’d find instant oatmeal with raisins and oatmeal cookies.

Make MyPyramid work for You

If you have access to the Internet, go to www.MyPyramid.gov. Fill in the age, gender (male or female) and activity level for yourself or one of the children in your care. See how much of each of the food groups to eat. Find meal patterns, menu suggestions and work sheets you can print out.

Write down what you eat or the child eats for a few days. Count the numbers of servings, or cups, or ounces from each food group. What changes do you need to make? Is more activity required for a healthy life?

Make at least one positive change. Keep it up.

It’s That Time Again!

Get Updated on How to Prevent Sun Injury and Insect-borne Illness

Both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend specific measures to prevent cancer and cataracts when exposing the skin and eyes to the sun. Also, national experts suggest that caregivers apply insect repellents whenever insect bites are likely to occur. Bites from mosquitoes and ticks can inject germs into the body that cause serious disease.

For Fact Sheets about what to do, search the CDC website for the words “sun screen” and “insect repellent” at www.cdc.gov.