

The Wellness Family

Dr. Gerken Keeps You Informed

Trampolines and the Aware Parent

Kids love to bounce on trampolines: the feeling of flying in the air and doing flips and twists and turns, the pride of learning new tricks and bouncing around. It's all so much fun, until they get hurt.

The Introduction of the Trampoline

Trampolines first became popular in the early 1960s when people were stretching flinging fabric over large holes in the ground. The Jumpsville Trampoline Center in Southern California had several designed in this manner in 1960. Next they were put on legs or poles, but these left dangerously large gaps around the edges and there was nothing to stop a jumper from falling off.

Modern designs are supposed to be safer by ringing the trampoline with netting. However, this does not address the problems of the gaps between the springs or of more than one child being on the trampoline at a time. History is proving that the only way to truly keep children safe on a trampoline is to not let them on one.

The History of Injuries

The American Academy of Pediatrics issued warnings in 1977, 1981 and 1999 emphasizing the dangers of trampolines and recommending that they not be used in the home or as part of PE courses at schools. Yet, despite these warnings, visits to emergency rooms have skyrocketed between 1990 and 2005.

An article in *Science Daily* reported in 1998, that 250,000 trampoline-related injuries were treated in hospital emergency rooms between 1990 and 1995 and that the annual number of injuries had grown from 29,600 to 58,400 per year.

A report in the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* published in 1998 revealed that 43% of all injuries were sustained by children between the ages of 5 and 9 while 28% were sustained by children between the age of 10 and 14. Sadder still is that over 15% of injuries were suffered by children under the age of 4. This clearly shows that most of the injuries are being sustained by children under the age of 14.

Pediatric Neurosurgery in 2000 said that trampolines were responsible for over 6,500 pediatric cervical spine injuries in 1998; and in 2001, the Consumer Product

Safety Commission (CPSC) estimated that there were 91,870 emergency room visits due to trampoline related injuries. Of those injured 93% of the victims were under the age of 15 and 11% of those children were under the age of 5. The CPSC has further reported that, since 1990, there have been 11 deaths, six of which were children under the age of 15 years.

Recent Statistics

Consumer Reports released a study in 2004 stating that 98,000 people were treated in emergency rooms because of trampoline use in 2003, of that number over 50,000 were children. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently released a study based upon the latest numbers from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) in 2007.



“...More needs to be done to educate the public about the dangers of home trampoline use.”

The study relied on data from 2000 through 2005 to estimate the number of emergency room visits by children under the age of 18 for trampoline related injuries and then compared that with the data obtained for 1990 to 1995. Results showed that there were an estimated 41,600 emergency room visits per year from 1990 to 1995 compared with an estimated 88,563 visits per year from 2000-2005, an increase of 133%.

The authors of the study believe that more needs to be done to educate the public about the dangers of home trampoline use. They further state that more extreme measures need to be taken to stop parents from purchasing what has proven to be so dangerous.

Ban Trampolines?

Studies have proven that public education about trampoline risks has not helped to reduce the number of injuries. In fact it's quite the opposite; the number of injuries increases exponentially each year leading the American Academy of Pediatrics to characterize

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page 1 Trampolines and the Aware Parent

trampoline injuries among children as an epidemic and recommend banning them for home use entirely.

Gary Smith, past director of emergency medicine at Children's Hospital of Columbus and currently serving with the American Academy of Pediatrics as the chairman of the academy's committee on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention, has been a long time supporter of a complete ban on home trampolines. In 1998 he was reported as saying, "We've seen the number of trampoline-related injuries skyrocket in just six years and the trend doesn't show any signs of slowing down. Instead it's continuing to increase."

His research showed that the injuries sustained during the use of trampolines were enough to support a ban of the product:

- The number of injuries increased by 98% during his six-year study
- Younger children tended to have injuries to their arms, the majority of which were fractures, breaks or dislocations
- Younger children also had a higher rate of facial injuries, which were most often lacerations
- Older children most often injuries their legs and these injuries tended to be bruises, sprains, strains and contusions
- About 3% of all injuries required hospitalization
- 12% of the injuries sustained by young children and 7% of injuries to older children were of the head and neck

Smith also stated that while most of the injuries sustained were to the children's extremities, there have been deaths reported as well as severe injuries to the spine and spinal cord, "which usually lead to paralysis and quadriplegia."

"It's alarming that these injuries are increasing at a rate that is rare to see for any other product out on the market," Smith said. "This is a public health problem that needs to be addressed with stronger strategies than those currently in place."

Surprisingly enough, there are more than twice as many trampoline-related injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms annually compared to babywalker-related injuries. Yet there is a clear national consensus on the need to ban babywalkers while trampolines, clearly the more dangerous item, are still being sold for home use.

In a 2005 article in USA Today, Smith's message remained the same. "Where we have gone wrong is that (trampolines) have popped up in many backyards, and parents don't realize the danger involved, and they're using them as toys without recognizing the hazards."

His opinion hasn't changed since 1998, when he admonished parents, "If you have one, simply don't use it. And if you haven't bought one yet – don't!"

The Chiropractic Factor

Your Family Wellness Chiropractor will encourage you to protect your children by not letting them use dangerous equipment. The potential dangers notwithstanding, the truth is that trampolines are hazardous to your child's still-developing spine. Every bounce on their bottom is a repetitive-stress injury, and upper-cervical injuries are common to children using trampolines.

References:

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Dear Parent,

Dr. Gerken is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. Take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

This newsletter is provided to you by:

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