

# **Garden Trampoline Safety**

## **Should I buy a garden trampoline?**

Because of the high injury rate in the USA, where a great many gardens have trampolines the American Academy of Paediatrics does not recommend the use of home trampolines and you can find many scare stories on the internet.

Here in the UK, these pieces of equipment are less common in gardens and the sport is mainly practiced in clubs, schools and leisure centres where supervised activity is much safer and has some huge benefits. Details of all clubs currently registered with British Gymnastics, the Governing Body for trampolining, can be obtained by contacting the membership department on 0845 1297129 ext. 395.

If you are considering buying a garden trampoline, you may want to consider proper training activities for your children instead. Before making your decision, ensure you understand all the safety information and why clubs are the safest environment.

## **What injuries are caused by trampoline use?**

Injuries to children playing on trampolines are on the rise, mainly because garden trampolines have increased in popularity. 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 injury associated with trampolines. Neck injuries usually happen when children try to do somersaults and land on their head or neck instead of their feet. The injury rate in the USA is highest for children younger than 6 years old.

## **How are most injuries caused?**

Almost 75% of injuries in the USA on trampolines result when more than one person are on the trampoline at the same time. When two people use the trampoline, the person weighing less is 5 times more likely to be injured than the heavier person. Adult supervision is no guarantee that a child will be safe on a trampoline, unless the adult knows exactly what to avoid. More than half of all trampoline injuries occur whilst the child is being watched by an adult. Having spotters (to catch anyone falling) around the trampoline helps reduce some of the risk of injury. Spotters need to be people big enough and strong enough to protect the jumper if they should get too close to the edge. Spotters are especially important when your child has friends over to jump, as you have liabilities under British law.

## **How can I make trampoline jumping safer?**

If your child already uses a garden trampoline, you should follow these safety measures.

## Training

The most important thing is to get them trained properly on how to use a trampoline! Take them to a club that has British Gymnastic qualified coaches. Be very careful in your selection of training sessions as many leisure centres operate outside of the Governing Body specifications and control. GymMark is a new Governing Body kite mark for safe and effective clubs, which you can ask about although only around 10% of clubs will have this by 2005, it is a great indicator if you have the choice.

Watch what's happening and talk to the coaches so you know the things to avoid. Please note that conversations with existing qualified coaches are not a substitute for either correct training for your child or a suitable qualification for yourself.

### Location of the trampoline and safety features:

- Clear the area around the trampoline and do not set the trampoline near trees, fences, poles, or other playground equipment.
- Set the trampoline where an energy-absorbing surface (for example, tall grass) surrounds it.
- Buy and use a frame pad that covers the entire area of the spring system if it doesn't come with one.
- If possible, lower the height to ground level by putting the trampoline in a pit. If you do, you must allow air to flow in and out, or it will slow the trampoline down.

### Before using the trampoline:

- Set rules for trampoline use and discuss them often with your children.
- Tell your children about the risks of not using the trampoline properly.
- Have your children remove any necklaces, jewellery etc and wear clothing that is not going to catch, including non-slip socks.

### Using the trampoline:

- Have someone properly train your child how to do stunts and skills. There are many safe skills that don't involve turning upside down.
- At all times, avoid any skill that involves being upside down, even if the child is trained!
- Never allow more than one person to use the trampoline at the same time.
- Do not allow bouncing followed by jumping off the trampoline.
- Have an adequate number of spotters around the edges of the trampoline.
- Become a member of British Gymnastics and learn how to coach and safely support your child's new activity.