

# Monkey bars alert: Playground concussions are on the rise

May 2 2016, by By Lindsey Tanner

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Playground concussions are on the rise, according to a new government study, and monkey bars and swings are most often involved.

Most injuries studied were mild, but all concussions are potentially serious and the researchers say the trend raises public health and safety concerns.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study examined national 2001-2013 data on playground injuries to kids aged 14 and younger who received emergency-room treatment. Of almost 215,000 kids on average treated yearly, almost 10 percent—about 21,000 annually—had traumatic brain injuries including concussions. Only nonfatal injuries were included.

Here are some key findings, published online Monday in *Pediatrics*:

## CLIMBING RATE

In 2005, 23 out of 100,000 kids had traumatic brain injuries, a rate that jumped to 48 out of 100,000 in 2013. The rate declined in the previous years but increased steadily after that. By 2013, the annual total was almost 30,000 kids treated for these brain injuries.

The rise may mean parents are becoming increasingly aware of the potential seriousness of concussions and the need for treatment. It's also possible more kids are using [playground equipment](#), the researchers said.

## THE INJURIES

Only 3 percent of kids with concussions were hospitalized or transferred elsewhere for additional treatment; 95 percent were sent home after ER treatment. Half of the [head injuries](#) were in kids ages 5 to 9 and injuries were more common in boys. Symptoms weren't listed but signs of concussions after a blow to the head can include headaches, dizziness, confusion, nausea and vomiting.

## CONCUSSION BASICS

Concussions are a type of [traumatic brain injury](#) typically resulting from a blow to the head that jostles the brain and temporarily disrupts brain function. Symptoms can last days or weeks and while most kids completely recover, repeated blows to the head have been linked with brain damage—most notably in some retired NFL players.

Dr. Jeneita Bell, a CDC brain [injury](#) specialist who co-authored the study, said the results highlight "that sports is not the only important cause of concussions and other traumatic brain injuries for children."

## TIPS

Playground equipment most commonly involved in concussions included monkey bars and swings. The study lacked details on how [kids](#) got hurt but many concussions result from falls and the researchers' recommendations include using soft ground surfaces including wood chips or sand, rather than concrete.

The researchers said adult supervision is key to helping prevent these injuries. They also recommend checking to make sure playground equipment is in good condition.

Bell also recommends reading playground signs "and using playground equipment that is right for your child's age."

**More information:** *Pediatrics*: [www.pediatrics.org](http://www.pediatrics.org)

CDC: [tinyurl.com/hudkdq6](http://tinyurl.com/hudkdq6)

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