



Pediatric Lawn Mower Safety Fact Sheet

More than 9,000 children younger than 18 years of age are treated in U.S. emergency departments every year for power lawn mower injuries.¹ Pediatric lawn mower-related injuries peak during warm weather months.¹ Approximately 25% of these injuries occur in children younger than five years of age.² Boys are disproportionately affected, accounting for three-fourths of these injuries.³⁻⁴ Back-overs, in which a child is run over by a lawnmower operated in reverse by another person, or run-over events are a leading cause of lawn mower related injury. These occur when child passengers fall off of a riding mower or are injured while playing nearby.⁵⁻⁶ Rotary lawn mower wounding capacities are awesome, with a power equal to that of dropping a 21 pound object from a height of 100 feet, creating the potential to severely injure a child⁵. According to the Consumer Product and Safety Commission, 20% of the approximately 75 deaths from lawn mower injuries each year occur in children.⁷ In addition, morbidity may be high. Lawn mower injuries are one of the most common causes of traumatic amputations in children, resulting in an estimated 650 amputations annually in the U.S.^{1, 6, 8} **All of these injuries are preventable.**

Injuries

Lawn mower injuries include lacerations, traumatic amputations, broken and dislocated bones, burns, and penetrating injuries. Lacerations are the most common injury, followed by soft tissue injuries, burns, and fractures. Hands and fingers are the most commonly injured body regions, followed by lower extremity injuries.¹ Amputations are among the most serious and debilitating injuries in children, often requiring multiple surgical interventions and long term medical care.^{1, 8}

Prevention

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and other experts recommend the following prevention measures:^{7, 9}

- **NEVER allow children to ride as passengers on ride-on mowers**
- **Keep children indoors or supervised a safe distance away from the area being mowed**
- Utilize lawn mowers with a control which stops movement if the handle is let go
- Wear sturdy, close-toed shoes and protective clothing
- Wear eye protection to prevent penetrating eye injuries from flying objects
- Clear the lawn of debris, like branches, wire, nails and other pieces of metal, that may act as dangerous projectiles if thrown by the lawn mower
- Use collection bags or plates covering the grass release opening to prevent projectile injuries
- Lawn mower maintenance including changing blade settings should be performed by an adult with the motor off and spark plug removed
- **Avoid mowing in reverse whenever possible; and always look for children prior to mowing in reverse**

The AAP also recommends that children younger than 16 years of age should not use ride-on mowers and that children younger than 12 years of age should not use walk-behind mowers.²

References

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