Serious playground injuries declining: study

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According to a new study, the amount of head injuries caused by falls from playground equipment in Ontario has declined while the overall rate of emergency room visits continues to hold.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information released new data Wednesday that suggests recent initiatives to improve playground safety are working.

CIHI spokesperson Margaret Keresteci said height restrictions on playground equipment and the replacement of hard surfaces under equipment to soften landings could be the reason for the decline.

Head injuries were significantly reduced from:

- 131 in 2002 to 2003
- 37 in 2004 to 2005

Despite the changes, 27 children visit emergency rooms in the province every day.

From 2004 to 2005, 8,734 emergency room visits were made, up slightly from the 8,698 logged from 2002 to 2003.

Children ages five to nine sustain the most playground injuries among all ages groups, representing 54 per cent of all hospital visits.

Safety groups remind parents that while playgrounds are getting safer, parents need to be vigilant and keep a watchful eye.

"We definitely want to see kids in playgrounds, exploring and developing their skills and muscles -- it is so important for them to be able to do that," Allyson Hewitt, executive director of Safe Kids Canada said in a release.

But we want their parents and caregivers to be aware of some of the risks and to understand how to prevent them. Safer playgrounds and close supervision are key to preventing injuries, and with it kids can play all summer."

The most common type of injuries seen in emergency rooms is fractures, particularly to the upper limbs, which represent 51 per cent of all playground injuries seen in hospitals.

With a report from CTV's John Musselman and files from the Canadian Press

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