

## **Garden Trampoline Safety**

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

You can currently find many worrying stories on the internet about garden trampolines. In the USA, where a great many people have trampolines in their gardens, the American Academy of Paediatrics does not recommend the use of home trampolines because of the high injury rate.

Here in the UK, although demand has grown in recent years, these pieces of equipment are less commonly found in domestic gardens and trampolining activity is mainly practiced as a sport in clubs, schools and leisure centres where, as a supervised activity, it 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 British Gymnastics Member Services department on 0845 1297129 ext. 395.

If you are considering buying a garden trampoline, you may wish to consider proper training activities for your children instead. Before making your decision, ensure you understand **all** the safety information and appreciate why clubs are the safest environment. Having a trampoline in the garden can be looked upon in the same way as a swimming pool, it can be great fun, but there is a need for training and rules. No parent would dream of buying a swimming pool and allowing their children unrestricted or unsupervised access or not teach them to swim before allowing them in. Trampolining is the same, great for you, great fun for your children but in the wrong hands potentially a danger. However, done properly, in a safe environment trampolining can be great fun.

### **What injuries can arise for trampoline?**

Injuries to children playing on trampolines outside club environments are on the increase, 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. Figures from the USA (the main source) indicate that the injury rate is highest for children younger than 6 years old.

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

The USA figures indicate that almost 75% of injuries on trampolines in the USA result when more than one person is on the trampoline at the same time. What is more, when two people use the trampoline, the person weighing least is **5 times** more likely to be injured than the heavier person. Unfortunately, just having 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 does help reduce some of the risk of injury. But Spotters need to be people big enough and strong enough to protect the jumper if they should get too close to the edge of the trampoline. Spotters are especially important when your child has friends over to use the trampoline, and anyone with a garden trampoline must recognise that they have liabilities under British law to others they allow to use it.

Nets should **NOT** be used to replace spotters as continuing adult supervision is essential.

## How can I make trampoline jumping safer?

If your child already uses a garden trampoline, here are some basic safety principles.

### 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 Gymnastics qualified coaches. Choose your training sessions carefully, as many leisure centres operate outside of the Governing Body specifications and control.

**GymMark©** is the British Gymnastics standard for safe and effective clubs. Ask whether the provider has **GymMark©**. Not all of British Gymnastics registered clubs will have this, but 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. Such conversations with existing qualified coaches may be helpful but they 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 and don't have garden equipment (spades, forks, mowers) lying around close to the trampoline.
- Set the trampoline where an energy-absorbing surface (for example, tall grass) entirely surrounds it.
- Buy and use frame padding 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 and their friends if they have them over. *And make sure they are followed!!*
- Tell your own and other children about the risks of not using the trampoline properly.
- Make sure all children using the trampoline 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 skills. There are many safe and impressive 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.