

# CHILDHOOD FALLS PREVENTION: KEY MESSAGES FOR TEACHERS AND THEIR STUDENTS

## BACKGROUND

A fall is the most common cause of childhood injuries requiring medical attention. For children age five to nine, playgrounds are the most common area for fall-related injuries to occur.

The majority of falls are predictable and preventable. A fall often happens when a child is learning a new skill. At this age, children try different activities, spend more time in new surroundings and become more independent. They are often not able to sense danger, or identify and avoid hazards and need adults to help them learn to manage these new challenges.

Development of fundamental movement skills such as jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, etc. builds physical literacy, which increases motivation, competence and confidence, and sets the path for staying active for life. Literature supports education and delivery of health promotion messaging regarding fall prevention and risk management to school-age children in the classroom setting, so they can begin to learn these skills themselves. Starting in Kindergarten, children need education on safety so that they will recognize and avoid potential hazardous behaviour.

## A FALL PREVENTION CHECKLIST FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS:

- Promote a clutter free classroom, free of tripping hazards
- Do a safety-check before children play
- Be aware of the playground safety policy for your school and school board
- Provide active supervision to ensure children use playground equipment as intended
- Promote safe play and reinforce safety rules
- Help children learn to identify and manage risk
- Always model safe behaviours for children

## FALL PREVENTION TEACHING POINTS FOR JK/SK/GRADE 1 STUDENTS:

- Tie up shoe laces
- Don't run in the classroom and hallway
- Pick up items from the classroom floor when finished to avoid tripping
- Take turns and never push
- Slide down feet first
- Hold onto railings
- Sit down on swings and slides
- Keep away from moving swings and the bottom of slides



## WHERE DOES FALL PREVENTION FIT WITHIN THE CURRICULUM?

The Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum includes learning expectations on topics of **Personal Safety and Injury Prevention**, more specifically: personal safety; safety at school; and potential risks at home, in the community and outdoors. There is opportunity to share fall prevention messaging from Kindergarten to grade three, however grade one curriculum has the best fit.

### Fall prevention and the grade one health and physical education curriculum:

#### Active Living : A3 Safety

A3.1 Demonstrate behaviours and apply procedures that maximize their safety and that of others during physical activity (e.g., cooperating, listening, wearing appropriate footwear, keeping a safe distance away from others, etc.)

- *Teacher prompt: “Give an example of something you can do in the school yard or playground to keep you or someone else from falling?”*

A3.2 Identify environmental factors that pose safety risks during their participation in physical activity (e.g., objects on the ground may cause tripping, wet pavement may create a slipping hazard), and describe ways of preparing themselves to enjoy outdoor activities safely.

- *Teacher Prompt: “What are things or situations in the playground that might cause you to trip, slip, & fall?”*

#### Healthy Living

##### C1 Understanding Health Concepts-Safe Practices-Personal Safety

C1.2 Demonstrate an understanding of essential knowledge and practices for ensuring their personal safety

- *Teacher prompt: “Why is it important to prevent a fall?”*

##### C2 Making Healthy Choices-Safety at School

C2.4 Apply their knowledge of essential safety practices to take an active role in their own safety at school (e.g., play in supervised areas, follow safety routines)

- *Teacher prompt: “What are the safety rules for our school yard and playground and how do they keep you safe from falling?”*

##### C3 Making Connections for Healthy Living-Potential Risks at Home, in the Community, Outdoors

C3.1 Demonstrate an understanding of how to stay safe and avoid injuries to themselves and others in a variety of situations, using knowledge about potential risks at home, in the community, and outdoors (e.g., items or situations that could lead to slips, falls, or injuries, including injuries from playground hazards)

- *Teacher prompt: “What do you do to stay safe and avoid injuries caused by falling at home and when you are outside?”*

## RESOURCES

**Alex at the Playground:** A children's story about injury prevention and the importance of safe play and taking turns at the playground in [English](#) & [French](#). After reading this book to your students have a discussion and ask them questions about the things Alex did to be safe at the playground.