

**Can't be too careful with safety of children Tot's death called `sobering reminder';
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Don't wait until there's a tragic accident or serious injury to make sure playgrounds and homes are safe for youngsters, urges the head of a North York health and safety group.

John McLeod died March 14 while on a trip with 11 other children to a City of York school playground. He apparently was caught by a skipping rope tied to the top of a slide.

"The death is a sobering reminder to every parent and caregiver that they need to check the area where children play to make sure it's safe and secure," says Lynne Sage, chairperson of Partners in Prevention.

"Tragedies make us look at our homes and backyards with a more critical eye.

"Perhaps there is a rope hanging from the fence or an old swing set that needs repair. These are the kinds of everyday things we overlook that can lead to trouble."

The freak McLeod accident happened at George Syme Community School on Pritchard Ave., two blocks from the Happy Day Child Care Centre on Jane St. near St. Clair Ave. W. where the children were enrolled.

Sage warns that accidents are just as likely to happen at home as in a public playground.

Most injuries involving children and requiring attention in hospital emergency rooms happen in spring between 4 and 8 p.m., according to statistics.

Most common injuries are to the face, neck and head, Sage says. Statistics also show most injuries happen to children in their own homes.

To make homes safer, Sage recommends parents and caregivers check all play equipment and toys regularly. Parents should make sure play apparatus are assembled properly according to manufacturers instructions and well maintained.

Children should also be reminded not to run up and down slides, or slide down head first. Slides should be wiped when wet.