

THE USE OF TRAMPOLINES AND MINITRAMPS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Middle and Secondary School Physical Education Council
Revised 1998

Over the years, trampoline accidents have resulted in a significant number of injuries. The annual frequency appears to be low yet persistent. The Consumer Products Safety Commission reports that from 1991-1996, trampoline injuries in the school have contributed to 1% of those injuries. The higher percentage of injuries occurred in the home.

Late in 1977, the American Academy of Pediatrics took a public position that the trampoline was posing an undue risk of serious injury and therefore warned that it should not be utilized as a competitive sport nor as an activity within physical education. Subsequently, further examination of the seriousness of the injuries and the benefits justifying inclusion of the trampoline within a physical education program, whether in educational institutions or recreational settings, has permitted the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation to formulate the following statement.

Risk of injury while participating in physical activities is diminished by proper instruction and emphasis on safety procedures. Many of the known trampoline accidents have stemmed from improper execution of the somersault. While there is little encouragement for trampolining as an interscholastic or intercollegiate event, the use of the trampoline in physical education classes does not apparently constitute an unreasonable risk of serious injury providing that the following conditions are ensured:

1. Trampoline participation should be elective. To prevent risks of injury, all new students should have the proper instruction and safety procedures should be emphasized.
2. A program with trampoline activities should be taught and supervised by an instructor with professional preparation. Therefore, skills will be taught in progression and safety procedures will be incorporated into the teaching process. The instructor should have direct observation of the activity and be able to intervene if safety becomes an issue.
3. Spotters must be in position at all times when the trampoline is being used. The instructor should train all students and teaching aides in the principles and techniques of spotting.
4. The somersault should not be on the list of skills to be taught in a regular physical education class. If advanced students with demonstrated proficiency want to learn this skill, a safety harness must have to be used every time the skill is attempted. The instructor would need to have trained spotters to assist with the safety harness.
5. Because of the potential danger, the trampoline should be locked and secured when not in use.
6. The trampoline should be inspected before each use. Replacement parts should be installed when equipment is worn.
7. An emergency care plan should be in place and actively understood by all affected personnel. The plan should include: first aid, class supervision while tending the injured student, communications for medical assistance, and transportation to a medical facility if needed.
8. An accurate record of all injuries should be kept with a review of all accidents to evaluate if there are other safety procedures that should be established.

MINI-TRAMP

The mini-tramp, while different in nature and purpose from the trampoline, shares its association with risk and spinal cord injury from poorly executed somersaults. The best of mats do not provide substantial protection from the mini-tramp accident that leads to quadriplegia. As recommended for trampoline safety, the mini-tramp should constitute an elective activity requiring competent instruction and supervision, spotters trained for that function, emphasis on the danger of somersaults and dive?rolls, security against unsupervised use, proper erection and

maintenance of the apparatus, a plan for emergency care should an accident occur, and documentation of participation and of any accidents which occur. In addition to that stipulated in the preceding paragraph, the following constitute the controlled conditions to be ensured.

1. No multiple somersault be attempted.
2. No single somersault be attempted unless:
 - o the intended result is a foot-landing.
 - o the student has demonstrated reasonable ability for such on the trampoline with a safety harness, off the diving board of a swimming pool, or in tumbling.
 - o a competent spotter(s) is in position, knowing the skill which the student is attempting, and physically capable of handling an improper execution. If the safety harness is employed, the instructor must be satisfied that it is controlled competently.
 - o the mini-tramp is reasonably secured to help prevent slipping at the time of execution.
 - o a mat should be utilized, sufficiently wide and long to prevent a landing on the mat's edge and provide for proper footing of the spotter(s).

Mini-tramps and trampolines share the same potential for injury if a somersault is executed poorly. Those injuries often lead to quadriplegia. Even the best mats do not provide the necessary protection for a poorly executed somersault. As recommended for trampoline, the same proper instruction and safety procedures should be emphasized. As in trampoline participation, mini-tramp participation should also be elective. Special attention should be placed on the skills to be included in a physical education class. Emphasis should be placed on the danger of somersaults and dive-rolls.

In addition, the following measures should be taken to control the risks of the activity:

1. Mini-tramp activities should be taught and supervised by an instructor with professional preparation.
2. Skills should be taught in progression and safety procedures should be incorporated into the teaching process.
3. The instructor should have direct observation of the activity and be able to intervene if safety becomes an issue.
4. Spotters should be trained by the instructor and be in position at all times when the mini-tramp is in use.
5. At no time should there be more than one student on the mini-tramp.
6. The somersault should not be on the list of skills to be taught in a regular physical education class. If advanced students with demonstrated proficiency want to learn this skill, a safety harness must have to be used every time the skill is attempted. Further, the intended result would be a foot-landing. No multiple somersaults would be attempted under any circumstance. The instructor would use trained spotters to assist with the safety harness.
7. The mini-tramp must be secured to help prevent slipping at the point of execution.
8. The landing mat needs to be sufficiently wide and long to prevent landing on the mat's edge.

National Association for Sport & Physical Education
*an association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and
Dance*
1900 Association Drive, Reston VA, 20191