



Parents of Autistic Kids Need to Check Swingsets Carefully

Posted On: April 22, 2010 by [Patrick A. Malone](#)

For many children with autistic spectrum disorders who are learning to deal with autistic mannerisms, riding on a swing is a daily therapeutic activity whose effectiveness in improving sensory integration has been documented in scientific studies (see a [ScienceDaily story](#) published in April, 2008).

However, a recent paper reports a potential hazard in these therapeutic swings that may cause eye injuries, according to the [New York Times' Roni Rabin](#).

Rabin cites a study appearing in the December 2009 issue of the Journal of the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology that describes two eye injury cases linked to the patients' use of swings. In both cases, young autistic children presented to the hospital multiple times with small foreign objects in the eye that were found to be metallic fragments. Noticing that the multiple occurrences

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pointed to a common cause, the paper's author, Dr. Dean Bonsall of the University of Cincinnati, took extensive history of the boys' daily activities and discovered their frequent use of a swing.

Dr. Bonsall hypothesized that wear and tear of the swings caused small metal fragments to become dislodged and fall into children's eyes. He recommended protective eyewear for one of the patients, which prevented further recurrence of the injury.

The study explains that the metallic foreign bodies in the eyes "leave a white scar and may become secondarily infected and lead to vision loss," therefore requiring timely medical attention. However, autistic children, especially those who are non-verbal, often have difficulty communicating discomfort of foreign objects in their eyes and therefore can fall victim to delayed diagnosis.

Dr. Bonsall encourages parents of autistic children who use swings to give them protective eyewear or wrap the swing mechanism in a cloth.

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