

Trampolines deadly, Children's warns

TEENAGER BREAKS BACK

Hospital has treated 40 injuries this summer after 'invincible' kids take bouncing too far

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When Curtis Lindsay walked out of Montreal Children's Hospital yesterday, he was wearing a brace after breaking his back in a trampoline accident.

He was fortunate to be walking at all.

"He just barely escaped being totally paralyzed," said trauma specialist Thierry Benaroch, director of the Children's division of pediatric orthopedics.

Curtis, 16, of Ormstown, was doing trampoline stunts Sunday when his foot slipped.

Instead of a frontward flip into the family's above-ground pool, he sailed three metres in the air and plunged head-first into the water. He smashed his head at the bottom of the pool.

"The pain was so bad I couldn't stand it," he recalled.

Curtis had suffered a T4 spinal compression. "Basically, he broke a vertebra in his upper back," Benaroch said.

The broken back is one of 40 trampoline injuries treated at the Children's emergency room so far this summer, said Debbie Friedman, head of the hospital's trauma program.

That's already up from last year's tally of 35 trampoline-related fractures for the entire season, she said.

"We do not recommend using trampolines. Don't buy it. It's not a toy," Friedman said.

"How many children have to die before it's taken seriously?"

The injuries the hospital has had to treat include broken and sprained ankles, cuts and bruises, arm and elbow fractures, and damage to internal organs.

The Children's issued an alert about the dangers of trampolines after a teenager died of a head injury in 1997, Friedman added. "The coroner came out with a recommendation that trampolines not be included in school programs," she said.

The Quebec Home and School Federation then called for a ban on trampolines in schools.

Officials suspect injuries are increasing because more trampolines are sold for home use.

Although trampolines come with manufacturers' safety guidelines, few children and teenagers use the devices as recommended. Or, they lose control.

"Kids get caught up in the moment and many think they are invincible," she said. "They jump higher and higher and they don't always think of what the outcome will be."

Curtis expects to be wearing

the back brace for three months. He'll then have to undergo physiotherapy.

"He was so incredibly lucky," Friedman said. "But somebody else might not be."

The family's trampoline is now for sale. It had been bought second-hand last year.

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