HOW CLEAN ARE OUR PLAYGROUND’S?

The Downs Children’s playground near Suspension Bridge Road, along with all other City parks remains closed to our kids. This is on Government advice to help combat the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. But is this really justified, could this ban be lifted particularly as our youngsters seem more resilient to the virus. Is there a case to permit this group to once again enjoy active play?

If a new study by HomeAdvisor.com is to be accepted then our playgrounds should remain closed. Our play equipment is far grubbier than we might think. The study found that high-traffic areas on playgrounds like rock walls, baby swings and seesaws each have 9 million colony-forming units (CFUs) per square inch. That’s more than 52,000 times more bacteria than your toilet seat at home!

Another major problem area is the slide {or slider if you speak proper Bristle} at a playground. That has an average of 6 million CFU/sq. in. at both the top and the bottom.

‘Kids racing down the slide at an outdoor playground may actually encounter around 60,000 times more bacteria than they would at the top of the slide at the local fast food joint or other indoor play area,’ the study notes.

Why the disparity between locations? Because indoor playground are cleaned and disinfected regularly. That’s not the case with public parks.

As for the methodology used in this study, researchers tested 11 different pieces of playground equipment at three different playgrounds, including an indoor playground, using sterile swabs provided by a laboratory.

Common household items like toothbrush holders, bathroom faucets, dog-food bowls, toilets and more were also given a bacterial headcount to establish comparison values.

**Tips to protect kids from germs and bacteria on the playground**

It’s impossible to create an antiseptic world for kids. If we try to, our kids will likely be very susceptible to who knows what later in life because they haven’t built up any resistance.

The reality is kids get dirty and that’s as it should be. Every fall, when the kids go back to school, they get sick and it works its way through their system. That’s actually a good thing.

But if you’re concerned about excess bacteria on playground equipment, heed the following advice:

Use hand-sanitizing products from dispensers on playground sites.

When you get home, have your kids wash their hands thoroughly with soap and hot water after playing. This is especially important before meals.

Have your kids play on equipment that sits in the sun. Ultraviolet light kills bacteria. Shaded equipment is more likely to have higher bacterial counts.

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