

## Safety Tips for Parents and Chaperones

Amusement parks and carnivals offer families a unique escape from everyday life, but they also expose children to potential dangers. ***Make safety your first priority.***

- **Talk with your children BEFORE they visit amusement parks or carnivals.**  
Discuss the different kinds of rides: roller coasters, whirling rides, Ferris wheels, dark rides, etc. Explain the motion of each ride and the purpose/importance of following the safety rules.
- **Make sure your children understand that amusement rides are dangerous places to fool around.** Children (and many adults) tend to confuse fantasy with reality when it comes to amusement parks. There's nothing magical about the whirling, twirling steel parts that bring us our thrills. Accidents can happen anywhere, even at well-respected parks like Disneyland.
- **Wear closed-toed walking shoes. Don't wear clothes, jewelry, or hairstyles that might catch in the machinery.**  
Floppy sandals, slippery soles, or high heels can cause children to trip. If your child has very long hair, she should braid it or wear it up. Dangling necklaces, baggy clothes, or long hair can accidentally get caught in the moving parts. If you use a "leash" to keep your toddlers within reach, take off the leash before taking them onto a ride.
- **Teach children how to make thoughtful decisions about which rides to try.**  
Watch the ride before getting on board. Ask questions that help them to imagine what it might feel like to ride. Look for riders the same age as your child getting off the ride. Do they look happy? Scared? Dizzy? Bored? What do their expressions tell your child about the ride?
- **Point out safety features such as seatbelts, lap bars, grab bars, and warning signs.**  
Explain how the safety equipment works, and what its purpose is. Parents should pay close attention to rides that use a single lap bar for multiple riders, as this presents a special hazard to young children. Single lap bars are designed to fit closely against only the largest passenger in the car, leaving smaller riders unprotected.
- **Point out the ride operators and watch as they load and unload riders.**  
Make sure your child knows to raise her hand and call out to the operator if she needs help.
- **Explain why it's important to obey height and weight limits, both maximums and minimums.**  
Children who are younger or smaller than the posted limit might slip out of the restraints. Children who are older or bigger might overload the ride.
- **Point out riders who are following the rules and those who aren't.**  
Ask questions to get your child thinking about the consequences of foolish behavior. What could happen if you knelt in your seat or stood up on a spinning ride or roller coaster? What could happen if you stuck your hand or foot out when the car was approaching the platform?
- **If your child is going off with other children, talk about group issues.**  
What should your child do if one of the kids they're with starts fooling around on a ride? What if one child doesn't want to go on a ride and the others start teasing or pressuring him?
- **Explain that amusement rides are safe and fun, but only if riders pay attention and follow all the safety rules.**