

What to Know Before You Mow



Mowing the lawn is a rite of passage in many families. However, if this task isn't supervised and safety precautions aren't taken, mowing can be dangerous to children and others nearby when the operator is inexperienced or distracted. It only takes a minute for an injury or accident to occur. Fortunately, most are 100 percent preventable by following a few basic safety guidelines.

Who Should Mow?

- Children should be at least 12 years old before operating any lawn mower.
- Children should be at least 16 to operate a riding mower.

Before You Mow

- Check the weather—don't begin if a storm is threatening or in progress.
- Mow in sufficient daylight, not at dusk.
- Pick up stones, toys and debris from the lawn to prevent injuries from flying objects.
- Never mow barefoot—wear sturdy shoes, not sandals.
- Use eye and hearing protection.
- Start and refuel mowers outdoors, never in a garage.
- Have an adult check and adjust blade settings.
- Keep children indoors and do not allow other children to play nearby while mowing.
- Never allow children to play on a lawn mower, even if it is turned off.
- Never allow a child to ride on a riding lawn mower with the operator.

While Mowing

- Only use mowers with automatic shutdown abilities, such as those with a control that stops motion when the handle is released.
- Don't mow in reverse unless necessary, and watch out for others.
- Be careful when approaching trees, tall grass, a building, or anything that can block your view of people or loose objects.
- Mow up and down hills when using a riding lawn mower. Riding mowers tip easily when driven across slopes.
- Mow across hills, not up or down when using a walk-behind mower. It's easy to slip when pushing a mower up or down a hill.
- Turn the mower off if: a child approaches, you need to step away from the mower even for a moment, you strike an object, you need to unclog or remove the grass catcher, or you cross a driveway, sidewalk or any surface other than the lawn.

After Mowing

- Wait for blades to stop completely before removing the grass catcher, unclogging the discharge chute, or crossing gravel roads.
- Use a stick or broom handle (not your hands or feet) to remove debris in lawn mowers.

This information is based on the American Academy of Pediatrics' policy statement *Lawn Mower Injuries to Children*.

