

Sandbox Safety

Prepared by ND Child Care Resource & Referral Health Consultant Team

Review these tips to create a safe sandbox play area for children in your care.

Placement of sandbox

- Sand play areas must be separate from landing areas for slides, swings, etc.
- Sandboxes should be placed in areas that are protected from wind. If this is not possible, especially in windy North Dakota, try to make windbreaks by using bushes, trees, or fences. Dampening sand with water before play may also be helpful in preventing sand from blowing into children's eyes.

Use the correct kind of sand

- Only using sand labeled as a safe play material or sand that is specifically prepared for sandbox use. Sand from other sources/sites may contain potentially harmful substances.
- Use sterilized sand or smooth-surface, fine pea gravel in sand boxes instead of compacting sand. Pea gravel is considered to be a choking hazard and not recommended for infants and toddlers, but can be used for preschoolers.
- Treatment of sand with chemicals to attempt to sterilize it within the sandbox is not recommended. Sand, already installed in play areas, cannot be safely cleaned without leaving residues that could harm children.
- Sand in sandboxes and play areas must be replaced as needed, and at least every 2 years.

Sandbox maintenance

- Keep sandboxes covered with a lid or other covering when not in use. Fasten the cover to prevent children or animals from getting under it and to prevent contamination by animal waste. Covers should also be secured or stored in a safe place when they are lifted or moved to allow children to play in the sandbox.
- Equip sandboxes with an effective drainage system that presents no safety hazards.
- Sandboxes must be inspected for signs of contamination and safety hazards such as cat feces, insects, sharp objects, etc. before each use. It is important to use a rake to inspect the sand under the surface, instead of just looking at the top of the sand. Hazards are easily concealed in sand.
- Remove sand contaminated with urine, feces, or other toxic substances, sanitize container and replace with fresh sand.

Sandbox first aid

- First aid for sand in eyes - Have child lie down, head to the side, and place a clean diaper (if available) next to head to catch water. Use clean cup to pour cool water over the child's eye. Continue to irrigate until the particles of sand are gone. Encourage the child to blink, but do not allow the child to rub his/her eye. Rubbing damages the eye. If irrigating does not work, cover the eyes and seek medical attention as soon as possible.

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