

Study: Bounce house injuries on the rise

By Michael Muskal, Los Angeles Times

Although they have become a popular staple at children's parties, inflatable bounce houses can be dangerous and are associated with a 15-fold increase in the number of injuries from 1995 to 2010, according to a study published in a scientific journal.

Writing in the journal *Pediatrics*, a group of researchers examined records from the federal National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, operated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. They looked at patients 17 years old and younger who were treated for injuries from inflatable bounce houses from 1990 to 2010.

"The number and rate of pediatric inflatable bouncer-related injuries have increased rapidly in recent years," they wrote. "This increase, along with similarities to trampoline-related injuries, underscores the need for guidelines for safer bouncer usage and improvements in bouncer design to prevent these injuries among children."

The study was co-authored by Meghan C. Thompson, Thiphalak Chounthirath, Dr. Huiyun Xiang and Dr. Gary A. Smith. All are affiliated with the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. Smith is the director.

Overall, an estimated 64,657 were treated 1990 to 2010, the researchers found. The numbers suggest 31 children a day in 2010 were treated in emergency rooms for broken bones, sprains and cuts from injuries in bounce-house accidents. That is the equivalent of one injured child every 46 minutes, they said.

Part of the problem is that the bounce houses have become increasingly more popular for parties and that means the number of injuries from children bouncing off of walls, floors and one another has risen. There were fewer than 1,000 injuries in 1995 but almost 11,000 by 2010.

“From 1995 to 2010, there was a statistically significant 15-fold increase in the number and rate of these injuries, with an average annual rate of 5.28 injuries per 100,000 U.S. children,” the authors said in the abstract of their findings. “The increase was more rapid during recent years, with the annual injury number and rate more than doubling between 2008 and 2010.”

Bounce houses can be rented for home or recreation center use. According to the findings, 43.7 percent of the injuries occurred at a recreation facility while 37.5 percent took place at a home.

A majority of injured patients, 54.6 percent, were male and the average age was 7.5 years old.