

# Bouncy Castles and Trampolines – A Word of Warning

**Beware of the dangers of bouncy castles for children's birthdays and events, writes Emer Mulry Personal Injury Solicitor.**

Having witnessed his employee's enjoyment while jumping on inflatable tennis covers back in 1959, Louisiana's John Scurlock, a mechanical engineer by profession, came up with the idea of inventing what we know today as the bouncy castle. As much as he wanted to bring joy to families and children worldwide, it's unlikely that he could have predicted the range of hazards that are associated with such fun.

As communion and confirmation season quickly approaches, bouncy castle providers look forward to a spike in demand for their services, while healthcare providers are bracing themselves for the inevitable influx of injuries they will encounter.

During the summer of 2014, VHI SwiftCare clinics in Dundrum, Swords and Cork treated over 200 of what they called "bounce injuries". These were not just cases of young children injuring themselves. In fact, the age of the patients ranged from 2 to 53 years of age. In May that year, 60% of injuries were sustained on trampolines and the remaining 40% on bouncy castles. These included sprains, fractures and breakages of limbs to, in even more unfortunate and extreme cases, death.

A large number of these accidents could be

avoided if users adhered to manufacturer's instructions and guidelines for use. These usually state that only one person should be on the bouncy castle or trampoline at a time but this is next to impossible to implement particularly at children's parties. Often these structures become overcrowded with people of differing ages, heights and weights, which inevitably results in the increased risk of injury.

The President of the Circuit Court summed up neatly the concerns relating to bouncy castles when he commented in a case involving a four-year-old who lost a tooth. "What always astonishes me is, having seen children on these bouncy castles, they are terrifying. How they don't come out with broken noses and broken teeth and everything else — it is quite astonishing."

It is advisable to check with your home insurance provider prior to hiring or purchasing a bouncy castle or trampoline particularly if friends and neighbours will be invited to use it.

The above should not be taken as legal advice and is for informative purposes only. Always contact a qualified solicitor for legal advice.



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