

Thursday, 17 July 2008

WARNING: EXERCISE TREADMILLS CAN BE TREACHEROUS FOR CHILDREN

Consumer Affairs Minister, Jennifer Rankine, is warning people with treadmills at home to be aware of the dangers they pose to children playing around them and the potential for serious injury to their hands and arms.

A number of incidents involving young children getting their fingers caught in treadmills prompted the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs to carry out tests on several models of treadmill-type exercise equipment.

“The product safety audit revealed that out of 18 models tested, 15 posed a high risk to children if a finger got caught in either the rear roller guard or under the foot platform while a treadmill was running,” Ms Rankine said.

Figures from SA health authorities show that 19 children were treated at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital after mishaps involving treadmills over the last 12 months.

The sorts of injuries reported across the nation range from serious grazing and friction burns to having flesh removed from fingers and arms. The injuries occurred while adults were using the machines as well as when children were left alone in rooms with the treadmills.

There have also been instances reported where children have suffered minor injuries after standing on a moving treadmill deck - but these injuries have generally been of a less serious nature.

“Our testing was done using treadmills that were moving at the conservative speed of 6 kilometres per hour, however treadmills can travel at speeds of 20 and 30 kilometres an hour.

“Obviously the injuries can be horrific and life changing. It’s crucial for people to make sure their children never play with treadmills and similar gym equipment that is commonly found in our homes these days.

“These machines were never designed to be the play things of children and it’s imperative that parents with treadmills in their homes take all the precautions they can to avoid a nasty accident.

“It is important for parents not to use the treadmill when a child is in the room, and after they use it, switch it off at the wall and unplug it to try and minimise any risk an inquisitive child could be exposed to,” Ms Rankine said.

OCBA is exchanging its findings with the NSW Office of Fair Trading, which has also been looking into this issue after recording about 50 injuries involving children and treadmills over the past two years.

For further information contact OCBA on 8204 9777 or visit www.ocba.sa.gov.au