

Timber is a common material used when constructing play spaces. Preserving treatments increase longevity and protect the timber from decay, fungi, wood boring insects and termites.

Australia's most widely used wood preservative to date has been Copper Chromium Arsenate (CCA). CCA uses copper to control fungi, arsenic compounds to control termites and chromium to fix the copper and arsenic compounds in the wood.

Creosotes are used for the protection of timber and timber structures against attack from insect pests and from fungal decay. There are essentially two types of creosote, one derived from distillation of coal tar (coal tar creosote) and the other from wood tar (wood creosote).

AS 4685:2021 requires that treated timber used for above or in-ground construction of playground items including equipment, fencing, garden walls, park furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating etc. exclude timber treated with CCA or creosote preservatives.



Appropriate Timber

Treated timber appropriate for use in playspaces includes timber that has been treated with:

- Ammoniacal Copper Quat (ACQ)
- Copper Azole (CA)
- Light Organic Solvent Preservative (LOSP) suitable for out of ground contact

Non-treated hardwood varieties of timber may be used although may be more expensive. Timber looking products made from recycled plastics are also available.

When purchasing timber for the construction of play spaces ensure that the products are treated with an Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) approved preservative (such as ACQ, CA and LOSP) that does not contain arsenic compounds or purchase timber eg. hardwood that has natural resistance to rotting and termites. Retain treated timber purchase documentation as part of your playground safety management system records.

To find out what timbers are naturally rot resistant and recommended for landscape applications contact your nearest timber supplier.

It is recommended that all timber is landscape grade and nails/screws are galvanised. Ensure timber is dressed and finished smooth to eliminate splinters .

Ensure children wash their hands thoroughly with soap after playing outside particularly if in contact with existing timber treated with CCA or creosote.

Maintaining Timber

For existing playground equipment and items constructed with timber treated with CCA or creosote that is in good condition, it is recommended to coat with an oil-based polyurethane or paint as a regular maintenance item to seal the treated timber. It is also recommended for all timber items to be coated with an oil-based polyurethane, paint or linseed oil to prolong longevity of the timber.

Regularly inspect timber items such as equipment, forts, jouncing boards etc. for:

- Wear and tear - repair or replace timber as required.
- Splitting - caulk gaps or replace timber as required.
- Splintering - sand smooth to remove splinters and burrs on a regular basis.
- Water penetration - repair and seal timber. Replace timber when required.
- Protruding nails, screws and bolts - ensure that nails/screws are embedded, finished flush to the surface or countersunk. Domed headed screws may be utilised. Ensure bolt threads do not protrude more than 8mm. Check that threads do not present burrs or splinters - sand to a smooth finish. Consider utilising stainless steel self-tapping screws to secure timber boards.



Timber is one of Australia's favourite building products

- Contact local timber suppliers, building, design and landscaping specialists
- Determine what types of timber are suitable for your project and where supplies are available
- Use sound building practices during construction
- Follow basic safety precautions when cutting or using timber

CONTACT KIDSAFE SA

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Need more help? Kidsafe SA provides a playground inspection service. Contact us for a quote to organise an inspector to visit your playspace and provide specific advice.

