

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS - PART I

For sun and heat, pool, insects, playground, bicycles and more...

Keep your family safe this summer by following these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).
Reprinted with permission.

SUN SAFETY

Babies under 6 months:

- The two main recommendations from the AAP to prevent sunburn are to avoid sun exposure, and dress infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and brimmed hats that shade the neck to prevent sunburn. However when adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least 15 SPF (sun protection factor) to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands. If an infant gets sunburn, apply cold compresses to the affected area.

For Young Children:

- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF should be at least 15 and protect against UVA and UVB rays.

For Older Children:

- The first, and best, line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses (look for sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet rays), and cotton clothing with a tight weave.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, and limit sun exposure during the peak intensity hours - between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen - about one ounce per sitting for a young adult.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.
- Use extra caution near water, snow, and sand as they reflect UV rays and may result in sunburn more quickly.

HEAT STRESS IN EXERCISING CHILDREN

- The intensity of activities that last 15 minutes or more should be reduced whenever high heat and humidity reach critical levels.
- At the beginning of a strenuous exercise program or after traveling to a warmer climate, the intensity and duration of exercise should be limited initially and then gradually increased during a period of 10 to 14 days to accomplish acclimatization to the heat.
- Before prolonged physical activity, the child should be well-hydrated. During the activity, periodic drinking should be enforced, for example, each 20 minutes, 5 oz of cold tap water or a flavored sports drink for a child weighing 90 lbs, and 9 oz for an adolescent weighing 130 lbs, even if the child does not feel thirsty.
- Clothing should be light-colored and lightweight and limited to one layer of absorbent material to facilitate evaporation of sweat. Sweat-saturated shirts should be replaced by dry clothing.
- Practices and games played in the heat should be shortened and more frequent water/hydration breaks should be instituted.

POOL SAFETY

Source: <http://www.aap.org/family/tippool.htm>

- Install a fence at least four-feet high around all four sides of the pool. The fence should not have openings or protrusions that a young child could use to get over, under, or through.
- Make sure pool gates open out from the pool, and self-close and self-latch at a height children can't reach.
- Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment.
- Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook - a long pole with a hook on the end - and life preserver) and a portable telephone near the pool. Choose a shepherd's hook and other rescue equipment made of fiberglass or other materials that do not conduct electricity.

- Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give children a false sense of security.
- Children may not be developmentally ready for swim lessons until after their fourth birthday. Swim programs for children under 4 should not be seen as a way to decrease the risk of drowning.
- Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."

BUG SAFETY

- Don't use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on your child.
- Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom.
- Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.
- To remove a visible stinger from skin, gently scrape it off horizontally with a credit card or your fingernail.
- Combination sunscreen/insect repellent products should be avoided because sunscreen needs to be reapplied every two hours, but the insect repellent should not be reapplied.
- Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective against ticks, which can transmit Lyme Disease, and mosquitoes, which can transmit West Nile Virus and other viruses.
- The current CDC and AAP recommendation for children over 2 months of age is to use 30 percent DEET. DEET should not be used on children under 2 months of age.
- The concentration of DEET in products may range from less than 10 percent to over 30 percent. Ten percent DEET only protects for about 30 minutes – inadequate for most outings.
- The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product, so read the label of any product you purchase. Children should wash off repellents when back indoors.

For more information on DEET: <http://www.aapnews.org/cgi/content/full/e200399v1>

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Source: <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/archives/maytra.htm>

Source: <http://www.aap.org/family/playgrd.htm>

- The playground should have safety-tested mats or loose-fill materials (shredded rubber, sand, wood chips, or bark) maintained to a depth of at least 9 inches. The protective surface should be installed at least 6 feet (more for swings and slides) in all directions from the equipment.
- Equipment should be carefully maintained. Open "s" hooks or protruding bolt ends can be hazardous.
- Swing seats should be made of soft materials such as rubber, plastic or canvas.
- Make sure children cannot reach any moving parts that might pinch or trap any body part.
- Never attach—or allow children to attach—ropes, jump ropes, leashes, or similar items to play equipment; children can strangle on these.
- Make sure metal slides are cool to prevent children's legs from getting burned.
- Parents should never purchase a home trampoline or allow children to use home trampolines.
- Parents should supervise children on play equipment to make sure they are safe.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Source: <http://www.aap.org/family/bicycle.htm>

Source: <http://www.aap.org/family/tbikmyth.htm>

- Do not push your child to ride a 2-wheeled bike until he or she is ready, at about age 5 or 6. Consider the child's coordination and desire to learn to ride. Stick with coaster (foot) brakes until your child is older and more experienced for hand brakes.
- Take your child with you when you shop for the bike, so that he or she can try it out. The value of a properly fitting bike far outweighs the value of surprising your child with a new one. For more information on finding the proper fit, go to <http://www.aap.org/family/bicycle.htm#choosing>
- Buy a bike that is the right size, not one your child has to "grow into." Oversized bikes are especially dangerous.
- Your child needs to wear a helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short or how close to home. Many accidents happen in driveways, on sidewalks, and on bike paths, not just on streets. Children learn best by observing you. Whenever you ride, put on your helmet.
- When purchasing a helmet, look for a label or sticker that says the helmet meets the CPSC safety standard.

- A helmet protects your child from serious injury, and should always be worn. And remember, wearing a helmet at all times helps children develop the helmet habit.
- A helmet should be worn so that it is level on the head, not tipped forwards or backwards. The strap should be securely fastened, and you should not be able to move the helmet in any direction. If needed, the helmet's sizing pads can help improve the fit.

SKATEBOARD, SCOOTER, IN-LINE SKATING AND HEELYS SAFETY

Source: <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/archives/marskate.htm>

- Children should never ride skateboards or scooters in or near traffic.
- All skateboarders and scooter-riders should wear a helmet and other protective gear; wrist guards are particularly important.
- Communities should continue to develop skateboard parks, which are more likely to be monitored for safety than ramps and jumps constructed by children at home.
- While in-line skating or wearing Heelys, be sure to wear appropriate protective equipment and only skate on designated paths or rinks and not on the street.

LAWN MOWER SAFETY

Source: <http://www.aap.org/family/tiplawn.htm>

- Try to use a mower with a control that stops the mower from moving forward if the handle is let go.
- Children younger than 16 years should not be allowed to use ride-on mowers. Children younger than 12 years should not use walk-behind mowers.
- Make sure that sturdy shoes (not sandals or sneakers) are worn while mowing.
- Prevent injuries from flying objects, such as stones or toys, by picking up objects from the lawn before mowing begins. Have anyone who uses a mower wear hearing and eye protection.
- Do not pull the mower backward or mow in reverse unless absolutely necessary, and carefully look for children behind you when you mow in reverse.
- Always turn off the mower and wait for the blades to stop completely before removing the grass catcher, unclogging the discharge chute, or crossing gravel paths, roads, or other areas.
- Do not allow children to ride as passengers on ride-on mowers.

Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics. *Reprinted with permission from AAP.org/parents.html.*