



Summer Safety Tips for Your Kids

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Summer is officially here. For most children, this means more outdoor activities and with the 4th of July celebration, fireworks. For parents, this means being especially vigilant to keep your child safe and healthy. Here are some tips to keep your child safe this summer, provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

SUN PROTECTION

Babies under six 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 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.

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. Before prolonged physical activity, the child should be well-hydrated. During the activity, periodic drinking should be enforced; for example, every 20 minutes, 5 ounces of cold tap water or a flavored sports drink for a child weighing 90 pounds, and 9 ounces for an adolescent weighing 130 pounds, 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

Install a fence at least four feet high around all four sides of the pool. The fence should not have openings or protrusion that a young child could use to get over, under or through. 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.

Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give a child a false sense of security.

Children may not be developmentally ready for swim lessons until after the fourth birthday.

When infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."

Continues on next page...

“Summer Safety Tips for Your Kids” continued...

BUG SAFETY

Do not 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.

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 two months of age is to use 30 percent DEET. DEET should not be used in children under two months of age. The concentration of DEET in products may range from less than 10 percent to more than 30 percent. Ten percent DEET only protects for about 30 minutes – inadequate for most outings. Children should wash off repellents when back indoors.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Do not push your child to ride a two-wheeler until he or she is ready, at about five or six years old. 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. 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 occur in driveways, on sidewalks and on bike paths. 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 should be worn so that it is level on the head, not tipped forwards or backwards. The strap should be securely fastened.

SKATEBOARD AND SCOOTER SAFETY

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.

FIREWORKS SAFETY

Fireworks can result in severe burns, scars and disfigurement that can last a lifetime. Fireworks that are often thought to be safe, such as sparklers, can reach temperatures above 1000 degrees Fahrenheit and can burn users and bystanders. Families should attend community fireworks displays run by professionals rather than using fireworks at home.

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