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Summer Safety

Parent - Family Newsletter

June 2010

TIPS FOR
ENSURING A
SAFER SUMMER
FOR YOUR
FAMILY

Safety First for Summer

The summer can be full of family fun, but unfortunately it can also be the season for trauma. Injury and death rates among children surge over the summer months. Drowning deaths among kids increase 89 percent over the summer, and bike-related deaths increase 45 percent between May and August. Deaths from falls increase 21 percent, and pedestrian-related deaths increase 16 percent.



The rise in risk, of course, is due to the fact that your children are not in school and therefore "have more time to get into trouble," says Chrissy Cianflore, director of programs for SafeKids USA (safekids.org). But the injury and death rates could be lower with proper safety precautions in place.

"It's definitely an awareness issue," she says. "When today's parents were growing up, they didn't have bike helmets or car seats. They figure, 'We survived.'"

Cianflore says another challenge is dealing with the mindset that accidents are going to happen and injuries are just part of growing up. "We want kids to be kids," she says. "There are certain badges of honor for growing up, and we understand that. But children drowning or experiencing a head trauma from a bike accident are not everyday accidents. These injuries are real and they can be prevented."

Help make sure your family has a fun and safe summer with these tips:

Actively supervise your children:

No matter the activity, the best thing parents can do to prevent injuries is to supervise their children. “We find so often that supervision is lacking in a situation where a child is injured or killed,” Cianflone says. This is especially true with a water injury. “Drowning can happen in a matter of seconds and it’s quiet—not like in the movies where it’s loud and the child is screaming,” she says. The most effective way to prevent water injuries is to always watch your children when they’re in the water. “If you’re at a pool party or with other adults, designate a supervisor to watch the water, just like you would designate a driver when someone has been drinking,” Cianflone says. “You can rotate with other adults, but just make sure when it’s your turn, you’re always watching the water.”

Know your child’s developmental stages:

Did you know that until a child is 10 years old, he’s not developmentally ready to cross a street by himself? Under the age of

10, children can’t appreciate speed and their peripheral vision has not fully formed. “They are at an increased risk because they don’t appreciate the risk of their surroundings,” Cianflone says. That’s just one example. As parents, you—and your pediatrician—know best when it comes to your child’s developmental readiness.



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Be a healthy model: Like with any healthy habit you want to instill in children, the key to making it stick is to model that healthy behavior. Don’t jaywalk in front of your children; always wear a lifejacket when on a boat; and never step foot on a bike without a helmet. When your children see you take safety seriously, they’ll be more likely to follow in your footsteps.

Engage your children in safety:

Make summer safety fun. When getting in the car, have a contest to see who fastens his or her seatbelt the fastest. To encourage children to wear their bicycle helmets, let them pick theirs out at the store. But make sure it’s the right size, Cianflone warns. “We find too often that kids are in helmets that don’t fit,” she says. Get your child’s helmet fitted at a bike shop to ensure proper fit.

Summer Safety Do’s and Don’ts

DO wear a lifejacket on a boat, even if you’re an excellent swimmer.

DON’T forget a booster seat when going on vacation. Even if it’s not required in your state, it may be in the place you’re visiting.

DO WEAR A HELMET WHEN RIDING A BIKE.

DON’T buy an ill-fitting helmet for your child. Get one that is properly fitted.

DON’T LEAVE CHILDREN ALONE AROUND OPEN WINDOWS, BALCONIES OR DECKS.

DO make sure a responsible adult is supervising the pool at all times.

DO cover up in the sun: Wear sunscreen and reapply it frequently. Also make sure your family members have sunglasses with UVA/UVB protection.

DON’T let kids play in streets, driveways or parking lots.