

Staying Safe and Active for the Summer

Written by Dr. Kimberly Dozier-Thornton

Now that we are truly in the summer season it is time for fun in the sun! Before you head out to the beach or tackle new challenging outdoor adventures, here are a few tips to consider.

Sun Safety:

Although we do not officially have seasons, we have days when it is a bit cooler, days when it is warm, and days when it is hot and humid. During the summer, we may have more time and opportunity to do outdoor activities, but we need to make sure we are protecting our skin. Infants 6 months and younger should keep out of direct sunlight. They can be exposed to some indirect sunlight but be sure to keep them shaded whether in the stroller or enjoying the view under a tree or canopy. For children 6 months and older, consider the clothing and choose light and breathable fabric with a 'tight-weave' pattern and hats with a wide brim to help provide some shade. Clothing with tight-weave patterns limit the light that is passed through, which you can observe when holding the fabric up to the light. Sunglasses with UV protection, at least 99%, can provide a safeguard as well. Do your best to limit your outside activities between 10 am and 4 pm, when the sun is at its peak. Consider using sunscreen for children 6 months and older and remember to reapply every 2 hours and after swimming while outside having fun. SPF 15 to 30 is appropriate. Thoroughly address sensitive areas such as the nose, cheeks, ears and shoulders.

Encourage your child to stay hydrated. Remind them to drink water before, during and after the activities.

Water safety:

Water safety is especially important. Accidental drowning is the second cause of unintentional death in children ages 1 through 4. Children and teens should be taught and reminded about water safety throughout the year. Remind them to never swim alone and choose safe places to swim, avoiding canals and fast moving waters. In open water, be careful with rip currents and teach children and adolescents to swim parallel to the shore to escape the current. Stay within visibility of a lifeguard and do not dive if the floor is not clear and of an appropriate depth for diving. Wear life jackets when boating.

Ensure that if you have a pool, other safety measures are in place such as an appropriate fence and that the drains are up to date and properly covered to avoid entrapment. Swim lessons are highly recommended for children age 1 years and older through a qualified instructor. Some children may need a refresher course.

Adults play a very important role with drowning prevention and water safety. Appropriate supervision is key whether staying within arms-length of young children in or near open water or having a designated adult providing close supervision at the pool.

Safety gear with bicycles, skates, scooters and skateboards:

Make sure that the equipment is appropriate for the size of your child. Before they are to get on, they should be reminded to always put on their helmet and safety gear. Remember, a helmet that has been

in a serious crash should be replaced. Always ride on the right side, with traffic and avoid busy roads or highways. And as fun as it is to feel the wind as you ride, the wheels will have to be put up at night. Even with reflectors and light colored clothing, it is not safe to ride after dark.

Playground Safety:

Make sure that your child is developmentally ready for the equipment on the playground. Assess the floor for objects that can harm the child if the floor is made of mulch. Assess the material and height of slides. Metal slides can become very hot so be careful. Ensure that the child uses the equipment appropriately such as sliding down feet first to avoid head injury. On tall climbing structures, check for guardrails or barriers to prevent falls. Your child should wear appropriate attire without loose objects such as drawstrings or necklaces that can get caught and cause injury when climbing. Teach your child swing safety. Remind them to sit appropriately in the swing and to not run directly in front of or behind a swing in motion.

The summer is a much needed break for children and an opportunity to learn new skills and enjoy the sun. We want to encourage our children to be active and have fun. But we must teach and instill in them preventative measures to play safe as well.

Resources:

[Sun Safety: Information for Parents About Sunburn & Sunscreen - HealthyChildren.org](#)

[5 Water Safety Tips for Kids of All Ages - HealthyChildren.org](#)

[Drowning Facts | Drowning Prevention | CDC](#)

[Bicycle Safety: Myths and Facts - HealthyChildren.org](#)

[Playground Safety - HealthyChildren.org](#)