



# Summer Safety

Long summer days unfortunately bring with them an increased risk of injuries as children spend more time outdoors in active play and often receive less supervision. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that you take the following precautions to make sure the children in your care are safe.

## Protect them from the sun

Don't rely on sunscreen alone to protect children from skin cancer. The best line of defense is a combination of protective clothing, hats with a broad brim, and sunglasses (look for sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of ultraviolet rays). Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15; apply 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapply frequently. Avoid sun exposure between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Infants under 6 months of age should be kept out of direct sunlight; and never leave infants to play or sleep in the sun.

The 2002 *Caring for our Children: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs* (2nd Ed.) recommends that all medications, including sunscreen, should only be used with a health care provider's recommendation. A physician or nurse practitioner may write a standing order for sunscreen, such as "With parental consent, children may have sunscreen applied to exposed skin, except eyelids, 30 minutes before exposure to the sun and every two hours while in the sun. Sunscreen preparations shall be applied according to the instructions provided by the manufacturer."

Child care providers may wish to request permission to use one particular brand of sunscreen on all children, rather than each child using a separate sunscreen brought from home. Parents need to test the sunscreen on their children's skin at least once before it is used in child care to make sure the child does not have an adverse reaction to it while in child care. Sunscreen should be stored out of reach of children.

## Prevent heat stress

Make sure children drink plenty of water before any strenuous activities, and periodically while they are exercising, even if they don't feel thirsty. When the weather is warm, pick activities that are not too strenuous for the temperature and humidity, and make sure children are dressed in light-colored and long-sleeved lightweight clothing. Do not let young children stay in the sun for long periods, even when wearing sunscreen. Consider placing a canopy or shade tent in one section of your outside play area, so that activities can take place in the fresh air but in the shade.

## Be safe around water

Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment. Even shallow wading pools pose a drowning danger to very young children. Make sure staff members can swim and are trained in life-saving techniques and CPR. An adult should be within arm's length whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water.

## Protect children from insects

- Wear light-colored clothing with long sleeves and legs. Tuck shirts into pants and pants into shoes/socks and boots.
- Prevent insects from entering indoors by fixing or installing window or door screens.
- Avoid areas where ticks are known to occur, and stay on trails if you go to these areas. Examine children frequently for ticks and remove any ticks promptly.
- Avoid places where mosquitoes breed and live, such as areas with standing water or thick, wet grass. Drain and discard any receptacles on your premises where water can collect.
- Don't use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on children or dress them in bright flowery prints, as these may attract bees and wasps.

- The most effective insect repellents that have been registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) contain DEET, Picaridin or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. When using them, follow the directions on the label exactly. Use the appropriate concentration for the amount of time you will be exposed. Never use insect repellents on infants under age 2 months, and use them with caution on children ages 2 months to 12 years of age.

### Make outdoor play areas safe

Carefully maintain all equipment, and make sure that swings are made of soft materials such as rubber, plastic or canvas. Make sure children cannot reach moving parts that might pinch or trap a body part. If your play area has a metal slide or other metal play surfaces, let children play on them only when they are cool—hot metal play equipment can burn little arms and legs. If possible, consider moving such equipment to a shady spot in your play area. Keep play areas free from debris and animal waste. Children should not touch sick or dead animals.

### Use bicycles, skateboards and scooters safely

Make sure children are ready and able to ride a wheeled toy before you let them use it, and that it is the right size for them. A child should be able to place the balls of both feet on the ground when sitting on the seat of a wheeled toy. Children should always wear helmets and protective gear when riding bicycles, skateboards and scooters. Children should never ride in or near traffic, at dusk or after dark.

### Handle foods safely during warm weather

Warm summer weather also brings an increase in foodborne illness. This is partly due to a natural increase in environmental bacteria, which flourish in warm and humid conditions. Additionally, the food we bring on summer outings is often not packed or stored properly to discourage the growth of pathogens.

Symptoms of food poisoning include vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. While these symptoms may be only a mild inconvenience to a healthy person, foodborne infections can cause severe dehydration in infants, young children, or any persons whose immunity is weakened by chronic disease.

Parents and child care providers need to observe food safety rules especially carefully in summer:

- Perishable items from the refrigerator should be kept in the refrigerator until it is time to eat. For trips or picnics, keep these foods in an insulated cooler, with several inches of ice or ice packs. Common sources of food poisoning in summer include potato salad, cold cuts, pasta salads, and other egg or dairy-based cold dishes. Proper storage can prevent this from happening.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Never mix them when serving or storing.
- Keep raw meat away from cooked food or food that is ready to serve. Also keep the utensils, plates, cutting board, etc., used to prepare raw meat away from prepared food.
- Cook all meat to *at least* the recommended minimum internal temperature. The recommended temperature varies for different types of meats, and should be prominently featured on the meat's label or packaging material. When you shop, be sure the meat you buy has this information provided on the packaging.
- Cold food should be left out no longer than two hours at room temperature (one hour if the temperature is 90° or higher). After that, discard it.
- Wash hands frequently during food preparation. For picnics, bring along disposable towelettes for hand washing.

For more information, see CCHP's related Health and Safety Notes *West Nile Virus: What You Should Know*, *The Use of Insect Repellent by Child Care Programs*, and *Sun Smart Policy*. Visit <https://cchp.ucsf.edu/> for copies.

#### References

West Nile Virus, Centers for Disease Control, 2006. [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/RepellentUpdates.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/RepellentUpdates.htm)

California Department of Public Health, California Early Childhood Sun Protection Curriculum (2011). <https://www.pleasantvalleysd.org/cms/lib/CA00000039/Centricity/Domain/3069/EarlyEdCurriculum2012.pdf>

United States Food and Drug Administration, Partnership for Food Safety Education; Fight Bac This Summer at [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org).