

SAFE SUMMER FUN

Summer is a great time for children to enjoy the great outdoors. Vacations and warm weather activities are ways families take advantage of the weeks children have off from school. With more children engaging in outdoor activities, there comes an increased risk of them being injured during the summer. More childhood injuries occur between the months of May and August than any other time of the year. The Suncoast SAFE KIDS Coalition at All Children's Hospital recommends the following to help ensure safe summer fun for the whole family.

BACKYARD BASICS

- ***Always supervise children, even if they are “only in the backyard”***
- ***Make sure all fences and gates are secure.*** Fix broken rails and check to see if there are any protruding parts
- ***Make sure children drink plenty of water.*** Children can become dehydrated. Periodically bring children inside for a rest and a drink especially on hot and humid days.
- ***Make sure children use sunscreen of SPF 15 or greater, even when it is cloudy.***
- ***Remove poisonous plants.*** Many common household and garden plants can be poisonous, and should be kept out of children's sight and reach. If you have any concerns about a plant, contact the Florida Poison Control Center at 1.800.222.1222.
- ***Keep tools out of children's reach.*** Never leave gardening tools where children can find them or fall on them.
- ***Lock up barbecue grills and gasoline containers.***

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- ***Familiarize yourself with neighborhood play areas.*** Inspect playgrounds for rusted or broken equipment and dangerous surfaces such as concrete or asphalt.
- ***Warn children about unacceptable play areas.*** Garages, construction sites, abandoned buildings, railroad tracks, dumpsters, waterfront and unsupervised swimming areas appeal to a child's sense of curiosity, but they should be strictly off-limits.
- ***Children under age 10 should never cross streets alone.*** Remind children ages 10 and older of the rules of pedestrian safety such as using sidewalks and looking left, right, and left again for traffic before crossing the street. They should continue to look both ways until they have safely crossed the street.

SAFE AND SMART CYCLING

- **Purchase a bicycle helmet for each child.** (Buy only helmets that meet safety standards). Insist the helmet is worn correctly every time the child goes for a ride.
- **Teach children safe bicycle behaviors.** Emphasize that a bicycle **is** a vehicle, have your child participate in bicycle safety days and rodeos.
- **Make sure the child's bicycle works properly.** Are reflectors secure? Test the brakes. Does the bicycle stop right away? Make sure gears shift smoothly and tires are secured tightly and properly inflated.
- **Familiarize yourself with the child's bicycling environment.** Encourage the child to bike in safe environments, such as those with bicycle paths.

SAFE SWIMMING

- **Make sure pools and spas are secure.** If you have a pool or spa, install a four-sided fence that is at least five feet high. The fence should have a self-closing and self-latching gate. Do not use the exterior of the house as one side of the fence.
- **Never leave children alone in or near water.** Parents and caregivers should always watch while children are playing in or near water, even in shallow wading pools.
- **Children should learn to swim.** Enroll children in swimming lessons taught by qualified instructors when your child is ready.
- **Do not assume your child is "drown-proof."** Children need supervision even if they have taken swim lessons and learned to swim.
- **Adults need to learn infant and child CPR.** Adults who do not know how to swim should learn.
- **Require adult supervision.** Remind children that they should never go near the water unless an adult is present.
- **Pay attention to the water itself.** Be aware of undercurrents and the changing nature of waves and undertows when at the ocean or lake.
- **Do not let children dive into water unless an adult is present and knows the depth of the water.** Diving should not be permitted in water that is less than five feet deep.
- **Watch out for sunburn.** Make sure children wear plenty of waterproof sunscreen of at least SPF 15. And you can protect children's feet from hot sand and sharp objects by having them wear water-safe shoes.

FALLS

- ***Unopened windows should be locked at all times.***
- **Make sure windows are secure.** Use window guards on all windows ground floor and up, except for windows that are designed as emergency fire exits.
- **Keep furniture, especially beds, away from windows.** Children are tempted to climb on furniture to reach windows.
- ***Keep draperies and window cords out of children's reach.*** Tie or hang cords at or near the top of window coverings. Cut the cords and retrofit them with special tassels. Children may be able to use dangling cords to hoist themselves up to a window. Dangling window cords are also a safety hazard because of the danger of strangulation.

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign, All Children's Hospital and The Suncoast SAFE KIDS Coalition urge you to follow these tips on childhood injury prevention to ensure this summer is both a safe and happy one for everyone.

From more information: contact The Suncoast SAFE KIDS Coalition at All Children's Hospital at 1.800.756.7233.