

Tips for Safe Outdoor Play



Sunscreen

Children need protection from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays whenever they are outdoors. Shade and sunscreen protect children from sun exposure and can help to reduce the risk of some skin cancers. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), even a few major sunburns can increase the risk of skin cancer later in life. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following guidelines regarding sun safety:

- If possible, use play areas that provide some shade to help children stay cool.
- Protect infants under 6 months from direct sunlight by keeping them in a shady spot under a tree, umbrella, or stroller canopy.
- Limit children's sun exposure between 10 am and 4 pm when UV rays are the strongest.
- Dress children in cool clothing such as lightweight cotton pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- A hat will protect their face, ears, and the back of their neck.
- Use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 protection, even on cloudy days.
- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outdoors so it is absorbed into the skin. It will need to be reapplied every two hours if children are outside for more than an hour and more frequently if they are playing in water.
- For children older than 6 months, apply sunscreen to all exposed areas, including children's ears if they are wearing a cap instead of a hat.
- For children younger than 6 months, use sunscreen on small areas of the body, such as the face and the backs of the hands if protective clothing and shade are not available.
- Follow the directions on the sunscreen.

Hydration

Children cannot regulate their body temperatures well and need additional water when the weather is hot.

- Provide regularly scheduled water break to encourage all children to drink during active play, even if they do not feel thirsty.
- Fluoridated water (bottled or from the faucet) can reduce the risk of early childhood caries, and is the best drink choice for young children in between meals.
- Additional breast milk or formula should be offered to infants, as extra water is not recommended, especially for infants younger than six months of age.
- Avoid sugary beverages, and drinks with caffeine.
- Play outdoors in the morning and evening when the temperatures are lower.

Water Safety

Water play is a favorite activity for many young children throughout the year.

- Wading pools, sprinklers and hoses can be used safely as long as you stay within arm's reach of your child and you never take your eyes off them!
- Teach your child to swim as early as possible.

- Teach your child to stay away from water without an adult.
- Always use active supervision when children are playing in or around water.

Playground Safety

Make sure that the playground you choose is well maintained and appropriate for your child's age.

- Inspect materials and equipment to make sure they are safe.
- Check the temperature of metal swings, slides, dark rubber and plastic materials, especially surfacing under and around playground equipment to make sure that these surfaces will not burn a child's skin.
- Use playgrounds with impact-absorbing surfaces to protect children from injury.

Insects and Insect Repellent

Protect children and adults from insect bites by checking for and removing insect nests under slides, in bushes and in the ground. Make sure there is no standing water near play areas for mosquitoes to lay their eggs.

- Use an effective insect repellent while outdoors by using products registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- These products often use different levels of a chemical called DEET. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that repellents should contain no more than 30 percent DEET when used on children.
- Insect repellents are not recommended for children younger than 2 months.
- Check for ticks after outdoor play.



Helmets

All children older than age one should wear properly fitted and approved helmets when they are riding toys with wheels or using any wheeled equipment. Helmets should be removed as soon as children stop riding the wheeled toys or using the equipment. Approved helmets should meet the standards of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Additional summer safety tips

- Drowning is the leading cause of injury death for young children ages 1 to 4. Stay within arm's reach whenever a child is in or near water.
- Families with backyard swimming pools should install a four-sided isolation fence, with self-closing and self-latching gates, around the pool. Fences should completely separate the pool from the house and play area to prevent children from accessing the water without supervision.
- When possible, open windows at home from the top and use window guards. Screens will not prevent children from falling out of a window.
- Never leave children in a car!
- When cooking outside, keep children at least three feet away from the grill.
- Make sure meat is cooked completely before eating.
- Set food out right before eating and refrigerated leftovers as soon as possible as bacteria grows quickly in the heat.