



Summer Fun and Safety

Safety experts predict that 1,800 children will be seriously injured while playing outside this summer, and about 50 will die. Riding bikes, swimming, walking and playing at the playground are time-honored, fun ways for kids to stay active. However, these activities do pose some risks. At least 40 percent of these injuries can be prevented by following some basic safety advice. Here are some tips on how to keep your children safe this summer:

Bike riding. Insist that your child wear a bike helmet, which will protect the head in case of a crash or fall. Children under ten should not be on the road, since they have not yet developed the mental and physical skills to ride safely in traffic. Teach your ten-year-old about road rules and how to ride safely near cars. Make sure your child practices repeatedly under your supervision before riding alone.

Swimming. Children under five have the highest risk of drowning because they are attracted to water but do not understand its dangers. They can drown quickly and silently. Reduce the risk by standing within arm's reach of your child whenever he or she is in the water or close to the water, and keep small children in a life jacket. Supervise older children and teens, too. Make sure your backyard pool has a four-sided, four foot high fence with a self-latching gate.

Walking. Children under nine are at risk as pedestrians because they have not developed good judgment about traffic. Make sure your child under nine crosses the street with an adult or older child. Before you allow the child to walk alone, have your nine-year-old show you that he or she knows how to cross safely by pointing out the risks and actions he or she would take to be safe.

Driver speed is also a risk factor. Many communities have been successful in reducing traffic speed using traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps.

Playgrounds. Most serious playground injuries occur when a child falls from equipment onto a hard surface. Choose playgrounds with a deep, soft surface. Keep children under five on equipment no more than five feet high.

Beach Safety Tips

If you are spending time at the beach, have your family heed these safety tips:

- Never swim alone!
- When possible, swim where a lifeguard can see you and in areas marked for swimming.
- Wear protective footwear on rough or rocky surfaces.
- Don't swim out too far.
- Never pretend to be drowning.
- Don't swim close to piers—those big, wooden structures that jut out into the water. If the water moves suddenly, you could hit a piling or rock.
- Store drinks in plastic containers at the beach; broken glass bottles and bare feet don't mix.
- Face the waves instead of turning your back on them so you'll know what's coming.

