



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Summer Safety

With summer just ahead, the warmer weather and longer days gives children more time to enjoy being outside. As a pediatrician and a parent, I think now is an important time to start talking about how to have a safe summer vacation. Here are some highlights to discuss with your family:

Water Safety -- If your children are going to be around water, make sure they know what you expect. Those who cannot swim should have flotation devices and always be watched. Those who can swim should know never to go swimming alone. If other adults are watching your children, they themselves should be strong swimmers. If you are in a boat, everyone in the boat, no matter how skilled, should wear a life jacket. Lastly, if you have a swimming pool, make it inaccessible to small children. Let your older children know your rules.

Exposure Safety -- Protect your kids from the sun. Use sunscreen. Limit the time your baby is exposed to the sun. Give your kids hats and protective clothing when they are going to be outside. Keep some sunscreen and bug spray at home and in the car. That way, you'll never be stuck without it. If you will be in areas with ticks, make it a habit to check everybody's skin and hair at the end of the day.

Bike, Board, and Blade Safety -- By law, those under the age of 18 are required to wear helmets when using bikes, skateboards, and roller blades. This includes scooters. In my experience, helmets are the difference between life and death. There is really not much else to say. Wrist guards and other pads are available as well. They're not required by law, but certainly serve to soften the fall.

Car Safety -- Make sure that your kids are playing in safe areas, away from traffic. Talk to them about looking both ways, using crosswalks, and making eye contact with drivers before crossing the street. Be a safe driver yourself – look out for kids! Seatbelts and car seats are important year round, of course. Also, talk to your teenagers about car safety. Make sure they hear from you not to drive fast, drink and drive, or ride with people who are being reckless.

Animal Safety -- Make sure your children know never to touch strange animals -- even dogs or cats -- they don't know. Encourage them to tell you if they see animals wandering around your house or wherever they are playing.

Stranger Safety -- Talk to your children about strangers. Teach them what to do if people they don't know try to talk to them or offer them something. Practice what your kids could say if they were approached by a stranger. Have a secret password for your family that no one would know unless the person was sent by you.

Take the opportunity to talk to your family tonight. Then when your kids' friends come to visit, do it again. I'm quite sure you can't talk about this stuff too much. Making your kids a little cautious is a good thing. It might even save their lives.

Laura S. Kelley, DO, is a pediatric resident at SUNY Upstate Medical University