

Fun in the Sun

The weather is getting warmer, pools are opening for the season, and schools are letting out. All this combines to increased outdoor time for children and their families. Keep these outdoor safety tips in mind to ensure your summer is a safe and pleasant one.

For Older Children

- The first, and best, line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses (look for sunglasses that block 99 percent to 100 percent of ultraviolet rays), and cotton clothing with a tight weave.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, and avoid sun exposure during the peak intensity hours — between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The risk of tanning and burning also increases at higher altitude.
- Sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 should be effective for most people.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.
- Some self-tanning products contain sunscreen, but others don't, so read the labels carefully. In addition, tanning oils or baby oil may make skin look shiny and soft, but they provide no protection from the sun.

For Young Children

- Babies under 6 months of age should be kept out of the direct sunlight. Move your baby to the shade or under a tree, umbrella or the stroller canopy.
- Dress babies in lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs, and use brimmed hats.
- If you cannot keep your child covered and in the shade, sunscreen can be applied. However, before covering your baby with sunscreen, be sure to apply a small amount to a limited area and watch for any reaction.

Heat Stress in Exercising Children

- The intensity of activities that last 15 minutes or more should be reduced whenever relative humidity, solar radiation and air temperature are high. One way of increasing rest periods on a hot day is to substitute players frequently.
- At the beginning of a strenuous exercise program or after traveling to a warmer climate, the intensity and duration of exercise should be limited initially and then gradually increased during a period of 10 to 14 days to accomplish acclimatization to the heat. When such a period is not available, the length of time for participants during practice and competition should be curtailed.
- Before prolonged physical activity, the child should be well-hydrated. During the activity, periodic drinking should be enforced, eg, each 20 minutes, 5 oz of cold tap water or a flavored salted beverage for a child weighing 88 lbs, and 9 oz for an adolescent weighing 132 lbs, even if the child does not feel thirsty. Weighing before and after a training session can verify hydration status if the child is weighed wearing little or no clothing.
- Clothing should be light-colored and lightweight and limited to one layer of absorbent material to facilitate evaporation of sweat. Sweat-saturated garments should be replaced by dry garments.

Pool Safety

- Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment.

- Make sure adults are trained in life-saving techniques and CPR so they can rescue a child if necessary.
- Surround your pool on all four sides with a sturdy five-foot fence.
- Make sure the gates self-close and self-latch at a height children can't reach.'
- Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook — a long pole with a hook on the end — and life preserver) and a portable telephone near the pool.
- Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give children a false sense of security.
- Children are not developmentally ready for swim lessons until after their fourth birthday.
- Swim programs for children under 4 should not be seen as a way to decrease the risk of drowning
- Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."