

Parenting Tips: “Fun in the Sun” Safety Tips

Automobile Safety

- Do not leave children unsupervised in a car for any reason. This is especially important in the summer when cars heat up very easily, but it applies year-round. Leaving a child inside a car can lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke, which can cause permanent disability or death. Leaving a child inside a vehicle may also be punishable as an offense under the Texas Penal Code. For more information, go to http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection/about_child_protective_services/faqchildalone.asp.
- Always secure car keys out of children’s reach.
- When getting out of the car, safely remove your children first, before unloading your groceries or other materials.
- Make copies of your keys and keep them in a safe place.
- Before getting out of your car, always check to make sure that no children are in the back seat.
- If your child is trapped in a locked car, call 911 immediately, instead of trying to pry open the lock yourself. The most important consideration in this situation is getting your child out of the car safely – the police are in the best position to help you do this as quickly as possible.

Pool Safety

- Swimming pools should be fenced all around. Make sure the fencing has no gaps under which children can crawl, and make sure it is high enough that children cannot climb over it.
- Pool gates should open out from the pool and self-close at a height a child cannot reach.
- Always supervise your children while they are around or playing in the pool, even if they are good swimmers.
- Utilize swim vests for children who cannot swim.
- Apply sunscreen to children every two hours; choose a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.
- Make sure that your children take breaks to rest, drink fluids, and eat.
- Limit sun exposure during the peak intensity hours, between approximately 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM.
- Take your child to swimming lessons once he or she is four to five years old, the age when most kids can learn to swim.
- Remove all toys after swimming, so children are not tempted to reach for them.
- Keep rescue equipment such as a shepherd's hook or life preserver in the pool area at all times.
- If the pool is not in use, secure it with a pool cover.
- Do not allow children to run or play rough around the pool area.

Remember, teaching your child how to swim DOES NOT mean your child is safe in water. Supervision is still necessary

Playground Safety

- Parents should inspect the playground before their children play to ensure it is free of hazards. Make sure to check the ground to ensure that it is free of debris, glass, etc.
- Make sure slides are cool to prevent burns.
- Supervise your child during playground play.
- Apply sunscreen to children before and during play.
- Dress children in appropriate clothes and shoes for play. Clothing should be comfortable but not too loose, to prevent catching, and it should be appropriate for the weather. Shoes should be close-toed and sturdy.

Insect, Plant, and Skin Safety

- Do not use scented soaps or lotions on your child.
- Utilize insect repellent when your children are going to be outside for extended periods during the summer months, or when they will be in a particularly humid or overgrown area.
- Avoid areas where insects nest such as stagnant pools of water or gardens with flowers in bloom.
- To remove a stinger, gently scrape it off horizontally with a finger nail.
- Carry and learn to use a basic first aid kit.
- Teach your children to recognize and avoid poison ivy.

Bicycle Safety

- Children of all ages should wear bicycle safety gear such as a helmet that is CPSC approved, knee pads, and elbow pads.
- Parents should not push their children to ride a two-wheel bike, until they are ready.
- Bikes should be the right size for the child, not too small and not too big.
- Children should not ride bikes in traffic areas. Instead, utilize bike trails and parks.

BBQ and Picnic Food Safety

- To avoid cross contamination, properly seal and package raw foods to prevent them from infecting ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash all food preparation materials before and after use. Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Wash your hands while handling foods, especially after changing a diaper or going to the bathroom.
- If cooking away from home, pack plenty of bottled water. Water available in locations such as parks or campsites may not be safe for drinking or cooking.
- Cook foods to the appropriate temperatures. You may utilize a special thermometer to check internal food temperature.
- Keep cold foods cold when traveling or going on a picnic by utilizing an ice chest with plenty of ice.
- Cooked foods should not be left out for more than 2 hours; they should be refrigerated or thrown away.

References: American Academy of Pediatrics and Keep Kids Healthy

