

Pavilion Pediatrics Summer Newsletter

July 2019



Happy Summer Pavilion families! We hope that you're enjoying some of the joys of summer: a slowed pace, less traffic in the mornings, more time for recreation and family time, and warm weather.

As I write this newsletter, I'm on vacation with my family, the kids are off on their bicycles, we're winding down from a hike and a swim, and I am struck by what wonderful opportunities summer affords us to unplug and enjoy nature, and for our children, the opportunity to enjoy some unstructured time and freedom. I think back to summers as a kid: hopping on bicycles and roaming around the neighborhood with friends, deciding on a moment's notice to start up a game of kick the can, or sitting on the dock and fishing, all without our parents' constant supervision. We didn't have phones to text our whereabouts. We knew - for the most part - when to come home, and what rules to follow. Now, in our age of constant connectedness, it feels a bit uneasy to simply say to our children, go out, have fun, and come back at dinnertime, but I think it's worth stepping into this unease, and letting our children explore some of the

freedoms of summer and relaxed schedules. I see, when I give my own children some small bit of this unfettered freedom, they thrive with the small sense of independence this allows. It makes me wonder how we - in our modern era of the constant news cycle, and barrage of social media, competing allure of video games, can offer our kids - at whatever age - a bit of freedom, safely, so that they can experience the pride that comes with earned trust and the joy of outdoor summer fun. So, whatever age your children are, here are a few reminders of ways to stay safe while enjoying the gifts of summer.

Sunscreen

Wear sunscreen, wear sunscreen, wear sunscreen, reapply sunscreen, wear sunscreen, spf 40 or higher. We all know this, and from the looks of our patients and the lack of sunburns in our office, I think we all do pretty well on this measure. A few questions remain. The FDA recommends avoiding sunscreen in infants under 6 months of age. This recommendation stems from concern over infants who, due to increased skin folds (hello cuteness), and increased skin permeability due to thinner skin, may be more likely to absorb some of the chemicals in sunscreen. However, there are many child and infant-safe sunscreens out there. For infants 6 months and younger, use as much protective clothing as possible, including wide-brim hats, but for when those cute hands, legs, and feet must have their day in the sun, look for options with few additives, and try to find sunscreens free of oxybenzone. And remember to reapply every two hours.

Pool Safety

Of course, one of the greatest joys of summer is dipping into a cool pool on a hot day. While children and infants can and should enjoy the pool, important precautions should be undertaken to prevent drowning. Drowning is the leading cause of injury death in US children 1 to 4 years of age and the third leading cause of unintentional injury death among US children and adolescents 5 to 19 years of age. Here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics for prevention.

- Phone down! Keep your eyes on your child while they are in or near bathtubs, pools, spas, or wading pools and when near irrigation ditches, ponds, or other open standing water. Sadly, drowning can happen in an instant.
- Stay focused at bath time. Prevent drowning at home by remembering that infant bath seats can tip over, and children can drown in buckets filled with water or in unlocked toilets.
- Fence it in. If you have a pool at home, or live near a house with a pool, assure that it is fenced in on all four sides.
- Teach children water competency. As young as one year of age, children can begin taking swimming lessons until basic water competence is achieved. Basic swim skills include the ability to enter the water, surface, turn around, propel oneself for at least 25 yards, float on or tread water, and exit the water.
- Ensure adequate safety devices: when on or around any watercraft, children and adults should wear life jackets, and swim in open water areas that are intended for swimming and have lifeguards present.
- Remember that drowning can happen in cold weather too. Be careful when skating or walking on ice and be wary of thin or thawing ice.

Insect Mischief

One of the less appealing aspects of summer life is the prevalence of insects that at best cause annoying bites and at worst can transmit disease. Here are some tips from the AAP on how to decrease the likelihood.

- Don't use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on your child.
- Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom.
- If possible, eliminate stagnant water, such as in bird baths or fish ponds, in your yard. Dump any buckets or tires that may contain standing water. Check that your window screens are tightly fitted and repair any holes to keep bugs out of the house.
- Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.
- To remove a visible stinger from skin, gently back it out by scraping it with a credit card or your fingernail.

- Combination sunscreen/insect repellent products should be avoided because the sunscreen needs to be reapplied every two hours, but the insect repellent should not be reapplied that often.
- Use [insect repellents](#) containing DEET when needed to prevent insect-related diseases. Ticks can transmit Lyme Disease, and mosquitoes can transmit West Nile, Zika virus, Chikungunya virus and other viruses.
- The current AAP and CDC recommendation for children older than 2 months of age is to use 10% to 30% DEET. DEET should not be used on children younger than 2 months of age.
- The effectiveness is similar for 10% to 30% DEET but the duration of effect varies. Ten percent DEET provides protection for about 2 hours, and 30% protects for about 5 hours. Choose the lowest concentration that will provide the required length of protection.
- The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product, so read the label of any product you purchase. Children should wash off repellents when they return indoors.
- As an alternative to DEET, picaridin has become available in the U.S. in concentrations of 5% to 10%.
- When outside in the evenings or other times when there are a lot of mosquitoes present, cover up with long sleeved shirts, pants and socks to prevent bites.
- Children should wear hats to protect against ticks when walking in the woods, high grasses or bushes. Check hair and skin for ticks at the end of the day.

Now, all that being said, remember, part of enjoying life is taking measured risks while staying as safe as possible. To be honest, I bristle at the thought of avoiding gardens where flowers are in bloom. In fact, I'd recommend everyone putting their phones down and going to a garden, swimming in a pool, and making sand castles on the beach. Just follow these precautions, and enjoy the freedom and fun that long days and warm summer nights can bring.

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