

Summer safety tips

Summertime can be a lot of fun; backyard cook outs, hiking in the woods, sports, and other outdoor activities. But it can also be dangerous. According to the 2007 U.S. Kids Summer Safety Ranking Report, 89% more accidents happen in the summer than during the rest of the year. Here are a few tips for staying safe this summer.

Stay Hydrated

When people play in the heat, they sweat. Perspiration acts like a natural air conditioner; however, this system can fail if you overexert yourself on hot and humid days, resulting in heat exhaustion or heat stroke. During activity, your body uses large amounts of water and it's easy to become dehydrated. To prevent dehydration, you and your children should drink about a cup of water every 30 minutes on hot days. Give the kids their own plastic water bottles to encourage drinking before, during, and after activities. Limit caffeinated and sweetened beverages, which can deplete the body of water. Be sure to moderate activity when it's extremely hot, and if you have a medical condition, it's probably best that you stay indoors.

Steer Clear of Poisonous Plants

Remember this rhyme: "Leaves of three, let them be." Exposure to the poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac plants can cause allergic outbreaks and uncomfortable itching for many people. If you come in contact with the sap of any of these plants, wash the exposed area that has come into contact with cool water only (no soap). Wash any clothing that may contain the sap or oil in laundry detergent and hot water. Know the plants in your yard and teach your child not to pick plants without first checking with an adult. Some plants are poisonous if ingested. Poison ivy can be avoided by wearing long sleeves and pants.

Take the Sting out of Bug Bites

Along with summer fun come insect bites. Bites from common culprits such as mosquitoes, gnats, ticks, bees, and wasps can make anyone miserable. Some insects are carriers of serious diseases, so it is important to avoid the bites as much as possible.

There are many safe and effective insect repellents that you can use to protect you and your family, including those that use DEET, citronella, or soybean oil. Be aware that insect repellents do not protect against most stinging insects, such as wasps and bees.

In general, apply the repellent to all exposed skin. When applying to the face, spray onto your hands and then rub onto your face, being careful to avoid the eyes and mouth. DEET is absorbed through the skin, so limit the amount you use. It's best to apply the repellent to clothing rather than the skin whenever possible. To minimize the chance of insect bites, you can also:

- Keep as much skin covered with clothing as possible. Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants, socks, and a hat especially in the evenings, when insects are at their peak.
- Wear light colored clothing.
- Avoid scented products, which can attract bugs.
- Make sure you change water in birdbaths, fountains, wading pools, etc. Remove excess or unnecessary water from places where insects like mosquitoes will breed.
- If there are warnings about mosquito-borne diseases in effect, stay indoors during the evenings when mosquitoes are most active until further notice.

www.babyzone.com

www.stltoday.com/thrive

www.cdc.gov

