

TEN SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Don't let your summer be an accident waiting to happen.

by Liz Walker

Though the benefits are great, summer fun can sometimes turn to summertime blues. May through August are what hospital emergency staff call the "trauma season." In fact, nearly 14 million children are treated at medical facilities nationwide each year for unintentional injuries. Mary Beth Ogle, Tulsa Safe Kids Coalition Coordinator at Saint Francis Hospital, offers some tips to help you and your kids avoid as much "trauma" as possible this year.

1. BACKYARD BASICS: Always supervise children, even if they are only in the backyard. Make sure all fences and gates are secure. Remove poisonous plants. Lock up or cover barbecue grills, gasoline containers, pools and spas.

2. KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD: Familiarize yourself with neighborhood play areas and inspect playground equipment for rusted or broken equipment and dangerous surfaces, such as concrete or asphalt. Warn your children about unacceptable play areas such as construction sites, railroad tracks and dumpsters. Don't allow children under 10 to cross the street alone.

3. SAFE CYCLING: Purchase an approved helmet for each child and make sure that wearing one is as automatic as wearing a seat belt, or riding in a car seat. Remind children that their bikes are vehicles, not toys. Teach them traffic rules and don't allow them to perform stunts. Make periodic checks to ensure the bike is working properly.

4. SAFE SWIMMING: Children age 4 and under have a drowning death rate two to three times higher than other age groups. Children can drown in as little as one inch of water. But drowning accidents can be avoided with precautions. Never leave children alone in or near water. Teach your kids to swim - don't assume they're drown proof. If you are at the ocean or a lake, pay attention to water conditions such as undercurrents and changing nature of waves. If you have a backyard pool, keep a telephone and emergency equipment handy. Don't allow kids to dive unless an adult is present and the depth of the water is greater than five feet.

5. SUN SAFETY: Apply sunscreen of SPF 15 or greater 15 to 30 minutes before going out into the sun. Reapply frequently. Dress your child in light colored fabrics that cover the child's exposed skin such as head, arms and legs. Be especially careful in high altitudes where the sun rays are stronger.

6. WINDOW DANGERS: Unopened windows should be locked at all times. Make sure windows are secure by using window guards on all windows. Windows that are open only five inches pose a danger to children 10 and under. Keep furniture that could be used to climb on away from windows. Keep draperies and window

cords out of children's reach. Cut long cords and retrofit them with special tassels to avoid strangling risks.

7. SAFE CAMPING: Bring first aid supplies and a cell phone if you have one. Pack essentials like flashlights, extra food, warm clothing and a compass. Know ahead of time the location of the nearest working telephone (in case cell phone is out of range) and ranger station. Never allow anyone to hike alone and map out your hiking trail ahead of time. Bring water on your hike and wear proper clothing.

8. PREVENT POISONING: Teach children to stay away from all plants, mushrooms, and wild berries unless you are certain they are safe. Teach children how to identify poison oak and ivy and warn them to stay away from it. Keep first aid supplies handy even on short hikes.

9. BITES AND STINGS: Apply insect repellent to a child's clothing and exposed skin. Some repellents are too strong for small children, so consult labels or ask your pediatrician what he or she recommends. When camping, shake all clothing before putting on. Teach children not to disturb or provoke any wild animals or snakes they encounter.

You may have heard recent reports about a Lyme Disease vaccine. Mary Beth Ogle says that Carol Means of the Tulsa Immunization Coalition has learned the vaccine is not recommended for children under 15 years of age.

10. SAFE SPORTS: Children ages 5 to 14 represent nearly 40 percent of sports related injuries for all ages. Some methods of injury prevention include matching and grouping kids according to similar skill level and insuring that they are given proper physical and psychological conditioning as well as instruction in using proper safety equipment. Baseball, one of America's favorite summer pastimes is also one of the most dangerous sports because it has the least amount of mandated safety equipment. Currently, helmets are required for batters and face masks are strongly recommended. The slowest change has been to softer baseballs. This is partly due to misinformation that soft balls do not perform as well as harder balls and that they may actually cause greater eye injury than the hard balls because the softness allows them to impact deeper into the eye socket. Neither of these situations have been proven to be true. A recent study by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission states, "Baseballs that are 15 to 20 % of major league hardness are recommended for youth baseball because these balls feel like a major league ball, reduce the potential for brain injury, cause less pain on impact, and do not increase the potential for eye injury." However, they also add, "The best way to minimize eye injury is by means of protective eyewear."

Resources taken from: www.family.go.com