

Keep Safety in Mind for a Fun Summer

Many of us are enjoying the summer with time at the lake, by the pool or on vacation. Keep in mind the importance of safety. Safety knows no season, but summer has its own set of concerns. Here are some tips to make sure you have a safe summer.

Water Safety

The No. 1 factor in water safety is adult supervision. Never let kids swim alone. That holds true whether swimming at a public pool or a private one, a lake, a river or the ocean. Don't let the children out of your sight.

Backyard swimming pools should be fenced and have a gate that is kept locked if the pool is not in use.

Have an approved child-proof safety latch on the pool gate and keep the key (to the gate) in a safe place where kids can't get at it. Make sure there is proper supervision whenever children visit a friend's home that has a swimming pool.

People with backyard pools should test the water's disinfectant level and pH frequently to make sure it is within recommended levels. Too much disinfectant or an incorrect pH balance can cause eye, ear and throat irritations.

If the family is planning an outing to a pool, lake or swimming party, make sure all children wear properly fitted life jackets.

Sun Safety

Sunscreen is an important skin-protection accessory whether in or out of the water. Any outdoor activity should begin with the application of sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside. Most experts recommend using waterproof sunscreen and applying often.

You need to reapply sunscreen on an as-needed basis since water activities will dilute their effectiveness.

It is important to apply sunscreen onto large areas of the body, such as backs, arms and legs. But don't forget other parts of the body that will be exposed to the sun, such as the back of your neck. Also, apply behind the ears, between the fingers and toes, and on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

Activities in salt water or in pools with high levels of pH may require more frequent applications of sunscreen, she added. A sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 is recommended.

When summer activities do not involve water sports, protect the skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants in a light-weight, light-colored, tightly-woven fabric such as cotton or some other natural fiber. Man-made fibers are more likely to be hotter than natural fibers because it prevents the flow of air to the skin.

Wear a hat that shades the face, ears and back of the neck, and sunglasses to protect the eyes. Stay out of the sun during the peak hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. if possible.

Also, drink plenty of water to keep hydrated. One rule of thumb for active children is to drink 5 ounces of cool water every 20 minutes when playing outdoors.

Bicycle Safety

When it comes to safe bicycle riding the main thing above all is wearing a helmet and knowing basic biking rules. Learn when and where you are able to ride a bike. Some places are safe and some are not.

When riding bicycles or tricycles, young children may need to be supervised by an older child or an adult.

Make sure the bicycle is in good working condition by inspecting the bicycle chain, brakes, tires and lights. In addition to a properly-fitting, age-appropriate helmet, children should wear shoes when riding bikes – no open-toed shoes or bare feet. And they should not wear loose-fitting pants that might get tangled in the bicycle chain.

Don't wear headphones while riding a bike either, she warned. Listening to music while riding might be fun, but it also limits hearing, which is a safety hazard.

Insect Safety

Wearing long pants and shirts with long sleeves, in light-colored, light-weight, tightly-woven fabrics can provide a measure of protection from insect bites, as well as protection from the sun.

Many insects are attracted by aromas, so using scented soaps, shampoos, lotions, perfumes or colognes is not advised for adults or children. Bright colors can also attract insects, so avoid vividly-colored clothing or flowery prints.

Insect repellent with DEET can be helpful, but be extremely cautious when using it on children. Don't use the product on children if the concentration is more than 30 percent, and don't use it at all on babies younger than 2 months.

Be aware that insect repellent has no effect on bees, wasps or hornets because these insects have a different kind of sensory system. For the most part, if you don't bother bees or wasps or hornets, they won't bother you. That's why children should not be allowed to play in areas where these insects are likely to congregate, including flowering gardens, near pools of still water or close to uncovered food.

With these tips you can have a safe summer.