

HAVING A SAFE AND FUN SUMMER

Summer is upon us, and we all have lots of fun activities planned for our families. In the article below Dr. Birute Wise, a Pediatrician with Community Care Physicians' Clifton Park Pediatrics practice, discusses some ways the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends to make sure our summer stays both fun and safe. Dr. Wise accepts most major health insurance plans and welcomes new patients to her practice at 1735 Route 9, Clifton Park, telephone # 371-5437.

FUN IN THE SUN

The first and best line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a wide brim, UV-blocking sunglasses, and cotton clothing with a tight weave. Stay in the shade as much as possible, and avoid sun exposure during the peak intensity hours between 10 am and 4 pm. Keep offering your children lots of fluids to drink.

Babies under 6 months:

Avoiding direct sun exposure is the best way to protect your infant's skin. Keeping babies in the shade and dressing them in lightweight long pants and long-sleeved shirts and brimmed hats are still the best ways to prevent sunburn. When this is not possible, it's ok to use a small amount of sunscreen on exposed areas of skin, such as the face, tips of the ears, backs of the hands, and tops of the feet.

Children over 6 months:

Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater. Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen, and reapply it every two hours, or after swimming or excessive sweating.

POOL SAFETY

Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment, even if they know how to swim. Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should always be within arm's reach.

Install a fence at least four feet high around all four sides of the pool. Make sure pool gates self-latch at a height children can't reach. Keep rescue equipment and a portable telephone near the pool. Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties". They are not a safe substitute for approved life vests and can give children a false sense of security.

HEAT STRESS IN EXERCISING CHILDREN

Intense physical activity should be limited during peak heat and humidity levels. Before physical activity in the summer, children should be well-hydrated. During the activity, they should be offered at least a few ounces of fluids every 20 minutes, even if they're not thirsty. Clothing should be light-colored and lightweight and limited to one layer of absorbent material to help sweat evaporate.

BUG SAFETY

Don't use scented soaps, perfumes, or hair sprays on your child. Avoid areas where insects congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, flower gardens, and uncovered foods.

Insect repellents with DEET are the most effective. Products containing DEET should not be used in children less than 2 months old. Read the label before purchasing a repellent containing DEET – the maximum concentration currently recommended for children is 30%. Apply repellent only to areas of exposed skin; not under or over clothing. Any repellent should be washed off well with soap and water as soon as the child is indoors.

BICYCLE, SKATEBOARD AND SCOOTER SAFETY

All children using these items must wear a helmet and appropriate safety pads, even if only going for a short ride. Children should never ride in or around traffic. When buying a bike, make sure that it is the right size for your child. Oversized bikes can be especially dangerous.

Portions excerpted from the American Academy of Pediatrics “Summer Safety Tips”.