



BLUE SKY PEDIATRICS ASHEVILLE

NEWSLETTER—SUMMER SAFETY



WATER

Beaches, lakes, ponds and pools should mean summer fun and cool relief from hot weather. Water can also be dangerous for kids if you don't take the proper precautions.

Kids need constant supervision around water. Young children are most vulnerable as they can drown in less than 2 inches of water. It is a good idea for parents to learn to swim and kids older than 4 years should learn to swim, too. Don't assume, however, that a child who knows how to swim isn't at risk for drowning. It is important to supervise kids while they're in the water, no matter what their swimming skill levels. Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision".

If you are using a life vest, check the weight and size recommendations on the label and have your child try the vest on to make sure it fits snugly. If your child is younger than 5 years old, choose a vest with a strap between the legs and head support (the collar will keep the child's head up and face out of the water). You should avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties". These are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give children and parents a false sense of security.

There are other concerns when babies are exposed to water. Infants are susceptible to diseases that can be transmitted in water. After an infant has been in a pool, dry the child's ears carefully with a towel or cotton ball to help prevent swimmer's ear. After being in a pool and being exposed to chemicals, wash your baby with a mild soap and shampoo the hair. If the baby is in water temperatures below 85 Fahrenheit, they can lose heat quickly, putting them at risk for hypothermia. Shivering infants or those whose lips are turning blue should be removed from the water immediately, dried off, and kept warm in a towel.

Kids should never run or push around a pool. They should also never dive in areas that are not marked for diving. In all water situations, if the weather turns bad (especially if there is lightning), everyone should get out of the pool immediately. You should teach your child that they can contact the lifeguard or an adult if there is an emergency.

Above all, supervise your kids at all times. It is easy to become distracted in a water situation, so designate an adult who will be responsible for watching the children. If you leave your child with a babysitter, make sure that he or she knows your rules around the water. Seconds count when it comes to water emergencies, so always take a cordless phone or a cell phone with you when you are watching kids during water play.



SUNSCREEN

Babies under 6 months: The two main recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics are to avoid sun exposure and to dress infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and brimmed hats that shade the neck to prevent sunburn. Parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least 15 SPF (sun protection factor) to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands. In an infant gets sunburn, apply cold compresses to the affected area.

Young & Older Children: Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF should be at least 15 and protect against UVA and UVB rays. Wear a hat with a 3" brim or bill facing forward, sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet rays, and cotton clothing with a tight weave would be the best line of defense. Limit sun exposure between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen, about one ounce per sitting for a young adult. Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating. Use extra caution new water and sand as they reflect UV rays and may result in sunburn more quickly.



BUGS

The current recommendation for children over 2 months of age is to use insect repellents containing 30% DEET. DEET should not be used on children under 2 months of age. Products with 10% DEET only protect for about 30 minutes. Children should wash off repellents when back indoors.

Tips to avoid bugs are to avoid areas where insects nest such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom. Also avoid using scented soaps, perfumes or hairsprays on your child. Avoid dressing children in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints. To remove a visible stinger from the skin, gently scrape it off horizontally with a credit card or your fingernail. If your child has been outside in grassy or weedy areas, it is best to check them for ticks that could be hiding in crevices, behind ears, and between fingers or toes.