

Summer Safety

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When the children are out of school, bored, and looking for things to do, this is a perfect time for them to indulge in things they should not. On a more positive note, this is a perfect time for them to get involved in activities that will help them grow, learn, and try new things. Summer safety is a must.

Water Activities

Not all children have a natural ability to swim and be safe around water. If swimming lessons are not possible, try to teach them how to hold their breath under water, get to the top and over the side of the pool. At the lake or beach, they need to be close to a dock or some type of floating device. Life preservers, floating toys, and rafts are necessary. None of these devices are a good substitute for a water buddy who can swim and/or help in a time of emergency.

Outdoor Activities

Some children can have fun outdoors for hours and create all sorts of things to do. The summer heat can create a very dangerous situation. Make sure children take breaks and have access to ample water to prevent over-heating and dehydration. Water is the best drink for hydration but other liquids will work. Be aware that drinks with caffeine such as cola tend to add to dehydration. Many fruit juices are high in sugar and calories.

We do live in Florida and that means all types of bugs and flying insects. As well as being afraid, many children are allergic to bees and other insect bites. The caregiver should always be aware of this and have appropriate antihistamines on hand.

Inside Activities

During the hottest part of the day or when the weather is threatening, children need appropriate activities to do inside. Whether the activity is as simple as reading, coloring, or creating a crafty project or something much more active, the caregiver needs to understand that attention spans are quite different for different age groups. Younger children have shorter attention spans. This is when behavior problems and accidents tend to occur. These times require the most adult supervision. Make sure the caregiver has emergency telephone numbers close at hand.

Summer Food

We all tend to forget healthy eating during the summer. It is easy because of the array of summer desserts and fun foods we have available. Healthy meals are a must, especially for children. A wide variety of foods should be served from all five food groups. This will help ensure a wide variety of nutrients in the diet. Lighter meals with cool foods are easier to digest in the heat. Make sure to follow the food safety rule "keep hot foods hot and cold food cold." Picnic items and food carried to outdoor functions must be kept at appropriate temperatures. Do not permit hot or cold foods to stay out for more than two hours.

Children may like to plan and fix meals on their own during the summer. Their appliance of choice is probably the microwave. It is fast and relatively easy but can be a problem if they do not understand the operation. It should never be run while empty and times should be watched carefully. Materials containing metal, even as small as a metal rim on a plate or cup, should never be placed inside.

Family Vacation

Most children like to visit new places but have a difficult time getting there. Lengthy airplane and automobile rides are difficult for them and parents as well. Activities and games can help. Parents need to understand that various ages are not going to be happy playing the same games or watching the same cartoons and videos. Stops to stretch muscles can relieve tension and help break up the time.

Vacation time can be fun and relaxing if the entire family is considered in the plans. If possible, allow children to take part in planning the time, choosing a part they would like to do.

Summer can provide a needed break from our typical routines. This is very important, even for our children. With some planning and appropriate supervision, they will enjoy their time alone as well as with friends and family members.

