

Safe Summer Fun!

Welcome summer! As summer is now in full swing, it is a good time to be thinking about summer and sun safety. Outdoor play is a wonderful part of children's development, and we need to ensure that they are kept safe.

Sun & Heat Protection

While most of us look forward to fun in the sun, we need to take necessary precautions with our young children to keep them safe and healthy. Most children accumulate between 50% and 80% of their lifetime sun exposure before age 18, so it is important that parents and child care providers teach and model for their children how to enjoy fun in the sun safely. To understand the importance of sunburn prevention, we should keep in mind that every sunburn increases our risk for later having skin cancer. Using sunscreen, protective clothing, and "basking in the shade" can reduce the risk of sunburn. Use a sunscreen with a minimum of 15 SPF (sun protection factor). Sunscreen is generally not safe for infants, especially under 6 months of age, so they should be kept in the shade.

Don't forget that eyes need protection from ultraviolet rays, too. Children frequently do not want to be bothered with sunglasses, so purchase some of those fun, multi-colored glass frames making sure they have 100% UV protection. Don't forget that kids want to be like grown-ups so if you wear sunglasses regularly, the children will follow your example.

Having shade available is another necessary practice when doing outdoor activities with young children. If trees and building shade are not adequate, you can use large umbrellas or gazebos or even wide brim hats. The effects of too much heat can be life-threatening, and damage can be done before you even realize it!

Hydration

We should assist our children in drinking frequently throughout the day. Active young children who play outside in the hot sunshine need to maintain an adequate fluid intake to keep their bodies going and avoid serious health complications. In the summer heat, our body fluids can be depleted very quickly as the body's natural cooling mechanism works to maintain a comfortable temperature. An average person needs two to four 8-ounce glasses of liquid every hour!

Sports drinks may increase children's desire to drink because they taste good, but they should be diluted by half with water. Sodas and fruit drinks contain too much sugar, and beverages with caffeine actually cause the body to lose fluid. Keep water readily available and easily accessible, reminding children to drink often. For infants, breast milk or formula generally provides enough fluid, except if they have diarrhea or vomiting (and once again, keep them in the shade).

Insects

The best way to avoid insect bites is to wear repellent; however long-sleeved shirts, pants, and shoes are also important. Avoid perfumed items such as soap and shampoo and stay indoors when insects are out.

As if mosquitoes are not irritating enough, they also carry diseases such as the West Nile Virus. Fortunately, children are less apt to become ill from West Nile than people over 50 or those with compromised immune systems. More good news is that less than 1% of mosquitoes in any area have

been found to be actually infected and less than 1% of people who are bitten and infected become seriously ill.

The Wyoming Department of Health's web site (www.badskeeter.org) lists 5 D's to reduce chances of getting the virus: Avoid being outside during Dusk or Dawn. Drain standing water and containers that collect water. Dress in long-sleeve shirts and long pants. Use mosquito repellent with DEET.

Not all repellents have the same concentrations of DEET. Higher concentrations are not more effective than lower ones, but their protection lasts longer. A DEET concentration with a maximum of 10% is appropriate for children; this will provide protection lasting two to three hours.

Safe Summer Tips

Drink Up!

- Water is the best fluid to hydrate your body.
- Drink BEFORE you are thirsty and during activities.
- Drink even after returning indoors from hot weather.
- Adults, set the example of drinking water.
- Remember to offer water OFTEN to children who can't ask for it.
- Carry water bottles with you to all activities.

Shade is Great!

- Dress kids in lightweight, light colored clothing. Wide-brimmed hats provide "wearable shade."
- Keep infants under 6 months of age in the shade and still watch the shade temperature.
- Try keeping strenuous activities to a minimum to safeguard against heat exhaustion.
- Provide frequent breaks in shaded areas.
- Be aware that the hottest period of day is from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Never leave a child (or adult or pet) in a hot vehicle!

Sunny Protection!

- Plan ahead! Sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or better should be applied at least 30 minutes BEFORE entering the sun.
- Apply sunscreen generously and reapply often - approximately every 2 to 3 hours and after sweating or swimming. Don't forget about lips, hands, ears, feet, and behind the neck and shoulders.
- Check the expiration dates of your sunscreen. The average shelf-life of sunscreen is about 2 years.
- Keep infants 6 months and under out of the direct sunlight.
- Do NOT use sunscreen for infants as their skin is very sensitive!
- While all skin types are capable of burning, fair skin with blonde or red hair, blue eyes and freckles may be at greater risk - but dark-skinned children need protection also.
- Use sunscreen year-round to protect from sun & snow-glare.

Those Pesky Insects!

- Stay indoors during high-risk periods—dusk, dawn, and evening.
- Wear protective clothing including long sleeves, pants, and shoes.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET with 10% or less concentration for children.
- Use repellent sparingly to exposed skin, following directions on the label and keeping away from eyes, mouth, cuts, wounds or irritated skin. Wash off repellent upon returning inside.

- Do NOT let young children apply repellent themselves.
- Store repellent out of reach of children.
- Do NOT use repellent on children less than 2 months old. Instead place mosquito netting over infant carriers when outside with infants.
- Empty and rinse water play areas and birdbaths at least weekly.

Further information?

Contact Healthy Child Care Wyoming

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