



PPD Spotlight on Crime Prevention Column

Summer Safety

Childhood should be full of memories of fun summertime activities including vacations, trips to the pool or beach, venturing out for ice cream and biking through the neighborhood. But while you and your kids enjoy the seemingly carefree elements of summer, emergency room doctors know it as "trauma season." This summer children ages 14 and under will be rushed to emergency rooms nearly 3 million times for serious injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes, drownings, bike crashes, pedestrian incidents, falls and other hazards. More than 2,500 of these children will suffer fatal injuries.

Tragedies peak during the summer months (May to August) because children are supervised less, have more free time and engage in more outdoor activities. Don't take a vacation from safety. Close supervision, proper protective gear, and other simple prevention steps will help your child avoid danger.

Sun safety

Sun safety should actually be practiced year-round, but we are more likely to experience the damaging effects of the sun in the summer simply due to the greater amount of time spent outdoors. Following are precautions that should be taken by children and adults to avoid sunburn, sun/heat stroke and dehydration.

- **Use sunscreen.** Wear sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. Apply sunscreen all over the body (even in places covered by clothing) 30 minutes before going outside, and reapply every two hours or after swimming or sweating. Sunscreen should be worn for any outdoor activity, even on overcast or cloudy days.
- **Avoid the heat.** Avoid outdoor activity between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are the most intense.
- **Get the right gear.** Wear sunglasses with 100% UV (ultraviolet) protection. Everyone, especially very young or very fair-haired children, should wear a hat. Wear cotton clothing, preferably with a tight knit.
- **Stay hydrated.** Be sure to consume enough water, and avoid sugary and/or caffeinated drinks such as soft drinks.

- **For babies.** Dress your baby in lightweight clothing with long pants and long-sleeved shirts and a wide-brimmed hat. Keep baby's feet covered with a lightweight blanket. If necessary, small amounts of sunscreen can be applied to exposed areas. Use strollers with a large canopy.

Water Safety

Whether swimming in the neighborhood pool or boating in a local lake, the water provides many opportunities for fun days and happy memories. Keep your child safe by following a few simple guidelines:

- Swim under adult and/or lifeguard supervision **only**.
- Never be out of arm's reach of your baby or toddler in or near the pool or body of water.
- Follow all posted rules.
- Avoid use of inflatable swimming aids ("floaties"). These can provide a false sense of security.
- On a boat: all children must wear properly-fitting life jackets at all times.
- Do not consume alcohol when swimming or boating.
- Pay attention to the weather conditions and forecasts and take proper precautions.

Bug Safety

- Don't use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on your child.
- Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom.
- Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.
- To remove a visible stinger from skin, gently scrape it off horizontally with a credit card or your fingernail.
- Insect repellents containing DEET are the most effective.
- The concentration of DEET in products may range from less than 10 percent to over 30 percent. The benefits of DEET reach a peak at a concentration of 30 percent, the maximum concentration currently recommended for infants and children. DEET should not be used on children under 2 months of age.
- The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product, so read the label of any product you purchase. For more information on DEET:

Personal Safety

With summer comes the advent of "latchkey kids" and the challenge of keeping them safe. Once you have determined that your children are, in fact, old enough to be at home alone, you should follow these tips to ensure their safety.

- The doors have secure deadbolts, and doors are always locked until parents come home.
- If you have a security system, your child knows how it works. He/She should be reminded to never use the code around friends, as you don't want that kind of information out in your neighborhood.
- A *working* fire extinguisher is accessible to your child, and your child knows how to use it.
- There is a smoke detector on every floor of the home.
- Your child knows and practices a fire alarm plan.
- A first aid kit is readily available.
- Emergency numbers are posted near the telephone (parents' work numbers, relatives, friends, police, fire station, ambulance, and so on).
- Appliances are well maintained. Teach your child how to use the microwave or toaster oven correctly so that she can prepare simple snacks or lunch.
- Guns are stored separately from ammunition, which should be under lock and key.
- A flashlight and batteries are available, and your child knows where they are in case of power outage.
- Emergency money is left with instructions for your child.
- Alcohol is locked away.
- Medicines, cleaning supplies and other toxic substances are in their original, labeled containers and stored in a safe place.

Some latchkey children experience exaggerated fears, chronic loneliness, and depression. These potential factors must be weighed against the cost of licensed child care or a neighbor you can pay to look after your child until you get home from work. Consider a teenager who might meet your child and keep them company until you arrive. The City of Prattville Department of Leisure Services offers a number of [wonderful activities and programs for children](#) during the

summer months.

This article was written with input from the Prattville Police Department and www.safekids.org.