

# Summer Safety Tips: Staying Safe Outdoors



Keep your family safe this summer by following these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Also, see [Summer Safety Tips: Sun and Water Safety](#) for more information.

## Fireworks Safety

- [Fireworks](#) can result in severe [burns](#), blindness, scars, and even death.
- Fireworks that are often thought to be safe, such as sparklers, can reach temperatures above 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, and can burn users and bystanders.
- Families should attend community fireworks displays run by professionals rather than using fireworks at home.
- The AAP recommends prohibiting public sale of all fireworks, including those by mail or the Internet.

## 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.
- If possible, eliminate stagnant water, such as in bird baths or fish ponds, in your yard. Check that your window screens are tightly fitted and repair any holes to keep bugs out of the house.
- Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.
- To remove a visible stinger from skin, gently back it out by scraping it with a credit card or your fingernail.

- Combination [sunscreen](#)/insect repellent products should be avoided because sunscreen needs to be reapplied every two hours, but the insect repellent should not be reapplied.
- Use [insect repellents](#) containing DEET when needed to prevent insect-related diseases. Ticks can transmit [Lyme Disease](#), and mosquitoes can transmit West Nile, [Zika virus](#), Chikungunya virus and other viruses.
- The current AAP and CDC recommendation for children older than 2 months of age is to use 10% to 30% DEET. DEET should not be used on children younger than 2 months of age.
- The effectiveness is similar for 10% to 30% DEET but the duration of effect varies. Ten percent DEET provides protection for about 2 hours, and 30% protects for about 5 hours. Choose the lowest concentration that will provide the required length of coverage.
- The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product, so read the label of any product you purchase. Children should wash off repellents when they return indoors.
- As an alternative to DEET, picaridin has become available in the U.S. in concentrations of 5% to 10%.
- When outside in the evenings or other times when there are a lot of mosquitoes

## Playground Safety

- The [playground](#) should have safety-tested mats or loose-fill materials (shredded rubber, sand, wood chips, or bark) maintained to a depth of at least 9 inches (6 inches for shredded rubber). The protective surface should be installed at least 6 feet (more for swings and slides) in all directions from the equipment.
- Equipment should be carefully maintained. Open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends can be hazardous.
- Swing seats should be made of soft materials such as rubber, plastic or canvas.
- Make sure children cannot reach any moving parts that might pinch or trap any body part.
- Never attach—or allow children to attach—ropes, jump ropes, leashes, or similar items to play equipment; children can strangle on these. If you see something tied to the playground, remove it or call the playground operator to remove it.
- Make sure your children remove helmets and anything looped around their necks.
- Metal, rubber and plastic products can get very hot in the summer, especially under direct sun.
  - Make sure slides are cool to prevent children's legs from getting burned.

- Do not allow children to play barefoot on the playground.
- Parents should supervise children on play equipment to make sure they are safe.
- Parents should never purchase a home [trampoline](#) or allow children to use a home trampoline because of the risk of serious injury even when supervised.
- Surrounding trampoline netting offers a false sense of security and does not prevent many trampoline-related injuries. Most injuries happen on the trampoline, not from falling off.
- If children are jumping on a trampoline, they should be supervised by a responsible adult, and only one child should be on the trampoline at a time; 75% of trampoline injuries occur when more than one person is jumping at a time.
- Homeowners should verify that their insurance policies cover trampoline-related claims. Coverage is highly variable and a rider may need to be obtained.

## Bicycle Safety

- A helmet protects your child from serious injury, and should always be worn. And remember, wearing a helmet at all times helps children develop the helmet habit.
- Your child needs to wear a [helmet](#) on every [bike ride](#), no matter how short or how close to home. Many injuries happen in driveways, on sidewalks, and on bike paths, not just on streets. Children learn best by observing you. Set the example: Whenever you ride, put on your helmet.
- When purchasing a helmet, look for a label or sticker that says the helmet meets the CPSC safety standard.
- A helmet should be worn so that it is level on the head and covers the forehead, not tipped forward or backwards. The strap should be securely fastened with about 2 fingers able to fit between chin and strap. The helmet should be snug on the head, but not overly tight. Skin should move with the helmet when moved side to side. If needed, the helmet's sizing pads can help improve the fit.
- Do not push your child to ride a 2-wheeled bike without training wheels until he or she is ready. Consider the child's coordination and desire to learn to ride. Stick with coaster (foot) brakes until your child is older and more experienced for hand brakes. Consider a balance bike with no pedals for young children to learn riding skills.
- Take your child with you when you shop for the bike, so that he or she can try it out. The value of a [properly fitted bike](#) far outweighs the value of surprising your child with a new one. Buy a bike that is the right size, not one your child has to "grow into." Oversized bikes are especially dangerous.

## Skateboard, Scooter, In-Line Skating and Heelys Safety

- All [skateboarders](#) and scooter-riders should wear protective gear; helmets are particularly important for preventing and minimizing head injuries. Riders should wear helmets that meet ASTM or other approved safety standards, and that are specifically designed to reduce the effects of skating hazards.
- Communities should continue to develop skateboard parks, which are more likely to be monitored for safety than ramps and jumps constructed by children at home.
- While in-line skating or using Heelys, only skate on designated paths or rinks and not in the street.
- Most injuries occur due to falls. Inexperienced riders should only ride as fast as they can comfortably slow down, and they should practice falling on grass or other soft surfaces. Before riding, skateboarders should survey the riding terrain for obstacles such as potholes, rocks, or any debris. Protective wrist, elbow and kneepads should be worn.
- Children should never ride skateboards or scooters in or near moving traffic.
- Riders should never skate alone. Children under the age of eight should be closely supervised at all times.

## All-terrain Vehicles

- Children who are too young to have a [driver's license](#) should not be allowed to operate or ride off-road vehicles. Children are involved in about 30 percent of all ATV-related deaths and emergency room-treated injuries.
- Because their nervous systems and judgment have not fully developed, off-road vehicles are particularly dangerous for children younger than 16 years.
- Don't ride double. Passengers are frequently injured when riding [ATVs](#). Most ATVs are designed to carry only one person: the driver. Passengers can make ATVs unstable and difficult to control.
- All ATV riders should take a hands-on safety training course.
- All riders should wear helmets, eye protection, sturdy shoes (no flip-flops), and protective, reflective clothing. Appropriate helmets are those designed for motorcycle (not bicycle) use, and should include safety visors/face shields for eye protection. Wearing a helmet may prevent or reduce the severity of these injuries.
- ATVs lack the common safety equipment found on all cars and trucks that are designed for street use. ATV tires are not designed to grip on pavement, so operators should not ride on paved roads. Parents should never permit nighttime riding or street use of off-road vehicles.
- Flags, reflectors and lights should be used to make vehicles more visible.

- Drivers of recreational vehicles should not drive while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or even some prescription medicines. Parents should set an example for their children in this regard.
- Young drivers should be discouraged from on-road riding of any 2-wheeled motorized cycle, even when they are able to be licensed to do so, because they are inherently more dangerous than passenger cars.

## Lawn Mower Safety

- Only use a mower with a control that stops the mower blade from moving if the handle is let go.
- Children younger than 16 years should not be allowed to use ride-on [mowers](#). Children younger than 12 years should not use walk-behind mowers.
- Make sure that sturdy shoes are worn while mowing.
- Prevent injuries from flying objects, such as stones or toys, by picking up objects from the lawn before mowing begins. Have anyone who uses a mower wear hearing and eye protection.
- Do not pull the mower backward or mow in reverse unless absolutely necessary, and carefully look for children behind you when you mow in reverse.
- Always turn off the mower and wait for the blades to stop completely before removing the grass catcher, unclogging the discharge chute, or crossing gravel paths, roads, or other areas.
- Do not allow children to ride as passengers on ride-on mowers.
- Keep children out of the yard while mowing.
- Drive up and down slopes, not across to prevent mower rollover.
- Keep guards, shields, switches, and safety devices in proper working order at all times.
- If children must be in the vicinity of running lawnmowers, they should wear polycarbonate protective eye wear at all times.

## Swim Safety Tips

Swimming is a fantastic form of exercise and a major component of many spring break trips and summer break fun. But parents should remember that swimming also comes with risk. Follow these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to protecting children from drowning.

## Pool Safety

- Never leave children alone in or near the pool or spa, even for a moment; close supervision by a responsible adult is the best way to prevent drowning in children.
- Whenever children under age 5 are in or around water, an adult – preferably one who knows how to swim and perform CPR – should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."
- Install a fence at least 4 feet high around all four sides of the pool. The fence should not have openings or protrusions that a young child could use to get over, under, or through.
- Make sure pool gates open out from the pool, and self-close and self-latch at a height children can't reach. Consider alarms on the gate to alert you when someone opens the gate. Consider surface wave or underwater alarms as an added layer of protection.
- The safest fence is one that surrounds all 4 sides of the pool and completely separates the pool from the house and yard. If the house serves as the fourth side of the fence, install an alarm on the exit door to the yard and the pool. For additional protection, install window guards on windows facing the pool. Drowning victims have also used pet doors to gain access to pools. Keep all of your barriers and alarms in good repair with fresh batteries.
- Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook – a long pole with a hook on the end — and life preserver) and a portable telephone near the pool. Choose a shepherd's hook and other rescue equipment made of fiberglass or other materials that do not conduct electricity.
- Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life jackets and can give children and parents a false sense of security.
- Children over age 1 may be at a lower risk of drowning if they have had some formal [swimming instruction](#). However, there is no evidence that swimming lessons or water survival skills courses can prevent drowning in babies younger than 1 year of age.
- The decision to enroll a child over age one in swimming lessons should be made by the parent based on the child's developmental readiness and exposure to water, but swim programs should never be seen as "drown proofing" a child of any age.
- Avoid entrapment: Suction from pool and spa drains can trap a swimmer underwater. Do not use a pool or spa if there are broken or missing drain covers. Ask your pool operator if your pool or spa's drains are compliant with the Pool and Spa Safety Act. If you have a swimming pool or spa, ask your pool service representative to update your drains and

other suction fitting with anti-entrapment drain covers and other devices or systems. See [PoolSafely.gov](http://PoolSafely.gov) for more information on the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act.

- Large, [inflatable, above-ground pools](#) have become increasingly popular for backyard use. Children may fall in if they lean against the soft side of an inflatable pool. Although such pools are often exempt from local pool fencing requirements, it is essential that they be surrounded by an appropriate fence just as a permanent pool would be so that children cannot gain unsupervised access.
- If a child is missing, look for him or her in the pool or spa first.
- Share safety instructions with family, friends and neighbors.

## Boating Safety

- Children should wear [life jackets](#) at all times when on boats, docks or near bodies of water.
- Make sure the life jacket is the right size for your child. The jacket should not be loose and should always be worn as instructed with all straps belted.
- Blow-up water wings, toys, rafts and air mattresses should not be used as life jackets or personal flotation devices. Adults should wear life jackets for their own protection, and to set a good example.
- Adolescents and adults should be warned of the dangers of boating even as a passenger when under the influence of alcohol, drugs, and even some prescription medications.
- Children follow your example, whenever you are on a boat – everyone, kids and adults should wear a life jacket.

## Open Water Swimming Safety

- Never swim alone. Even good swimmers need buddies!
- A lifeguard (or another adult who knows about water rescue) needs to be watching children whenever they are in or near the water. Younger children should be closely supervised while in or near the water – use "touch supervision," keeping no more than an arm's length away.
- Make sure your child knows never to dive into water except when permitted by an adult who knows the depth of the water and who has checked for underwater objects.
- Never let your child swim in canals or any fast-moving water.
- Ocean swimming should only be allowed when a lifeguard is on duty.

- Teach children about rip currents. If you are caught in a rip current, swim parallel to shore until you escape the current, and then swim back to shore.
- Be aware that pools and beaches in other countries may not have lifeguards, and pools may have unsafe drain systems. Supervise children closely.
- At the beach, stay within the designated swimming area and ideally within the visibility of a lifeguard
- Be aware of rip currents. If you should get caught in one, don't try to swim against it. Swim parallel to shore until clear of the current.
- Seek shelter in case of storm. Get out of the water. Get off the beach in case of lightning.