



Springfield-Greene County
Health Department
Helping people live longer, healthier, happier lives

Safe, Sunny Summer

As children spend more unsupervised time outside this summer, their chance for injury increases. Child injuries and deaths peak during the summer months of May through August. Each summer millions of children under the age of 15 are rushed to emergency rooms for serious injuries from car crashes, bicycle crashes, drownings, falls and other accidents.

The health department encourages parents and caregivers to positively influence their children's safety decisions. According to research, children are more likely to protect themselves by wearing bicycle helmets or by buckling their seatbelts if they see their parents doing the same thing.

While falls and motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury among children, other things such as heat, sun exposure and dehydration can also threaten their health.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, most "non-melanoma" skin cancers are caused by unprotected skin exposure in childhood and adolescence. Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, killed nearly 8,000 people last year, and often strikes people who suffered deep, intense sunburns during childhood or adolescence. In fact, 80% of a person's lifetime skin exposure occurs before age 21.

Model sun safety for your children this summer and encourage them to make healthy decisions.

- ✓ **Cover up** with a wide-brimmed hat, loose-fitting, light colored cotton clothing and sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet rays.
- ✓ **Avoid sun exposure** during the peak hours of 10:00am to 4:00pm.
- ✓ **Apply sunscreen** with both UVA and UVB protection and a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. Put it on at least 30 minutes before going outside.
- ✓ **Reapply sunscreen** every two hours, or after swimming or heavy sweating.
- ✓ **Use sunscreen** even when it is cloudy outside.
- ✓ **Avoid sun exposure for infants** under six months old. If they must be in the sun, dress them in lightweight long-sleeved shirts and long pants and a brimmed hat. You may also apply a minimal amount of sunscreen to small areas like their face and the back of their hands.

Severe heat can also cause illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Each year more people in the United States die from extreme heat than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes combined. Children under four years old are especially at risk.

Heat is much more dangerous to children than it is to adults. For example, when trapped in a car, a young child's core body temperature may increase three to five times faster than an adult's. Even when the outside temperature is only 80°F, the temperature inside a car can reach dangerous levels in just minutes. According to Safe Kids, one-third of the heat-related deaths in 2000 occurred when children crawled into unlocked cars and became trapped.

(more on page 2)



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Safe, Sunny Summer (continued)

To protect your children from heat-related injury and illness, follow these guidelines:

- ✓ Limit their outdoor activity and intensity during hot, humid weather.
- ✓ Give children plenty of cool water to drink to keep them hydrated.
- ✓ Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle.
- ✓ Check to make sure all children leave the vehicle when you arrive at your destination.
- ✓ Teach your children not to play in, on or around cars.
- ✓ Always lock car doors and trunks and keep the keys out of a child's reach.
- ✓ Check the temperature of car seats and seat belts before putting a child into a vehicle.

Summer should be a wonderful time for adults and children alike. Help your kids stay safe this summer by following the safety tips above, and by modeling safe behavior to encourage your children to make wise decisions.

For more information on summer safety for kids, call the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658.