



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

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Health Services Newsletter

Summer Safety

For many children and families, summer means enjoying a range of outdoor activities that may not be available during other seasons. But summer fun also brings additional risks. Early Head Start and Head Start health managers can help keep children safe from injury by helping staff and families identify and avoid potential dangers related to summer weather, outdoor environments, water play, hot vehicles, and other risk factors.

Staff and families can address summer hazards that may compromise **young children's safety. Most injuries are predictable and preventable, and** the presence of a caregiver providing active supervision is the key to injury prevention. And understanding how to avoid summer safety risks such as insect bites or over-exposure to heat and sun protects children from these hazards as well.

Your Program Should...

Review summer safety procedures with your Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC), community health department, and primary care providers. Consider...

◆ *Playground*

Scan for and remove hazards such as standing water, insect nests, and trash. Check the temperature of metal swings, slides, dark rubber and plastic materials, especially surfacing under and around playground equipment. Equipment and surfacing in direct sunlight for an extended period of time, even in mild weather, can burn a young child, especially if the **child's skin is directly exposed to the hot surface.**

◆ *Weather*

Check temperature, humidity, and air quality to decide when it is safe for children to go outside, and for how long. The [Iowa Department of Public Health's Weather Watch Chart](#) provides guidance for these decisions.

◆ *Sun*

Protect children from over-exposure to harmful UV rays on both sunny and cloudy days by avoiding outdoor play during high sun hours. Lightweight clothing and hats, and shade from trees or canopies also provide protection. Use sunscreen for children 6 months of age or older.

◆ *Air quality*

Establish procedures for identifying poor air quality, such as a change in the ozone or a higher number of pollutants and fine particles in the air. These can irritate the airways of children with asthma or other special health care needs.

◆ *Insects*

Use insect repellent sparingly with guidance from your local health department. Check for ticks after outdoor play where ticks are likely to be found.



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FOR YOUR FAMILY NEWSLETTER

YOU CAN TAILOR THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO INCLUDE IN YOUR FAMILY NEWSLETTER:

Summer Safety Tips

Children love being outside in the summer months. Here are some ways to keep them safe.

- Use “broad spectrum” sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher if your child is over 6-months-old. Sunscreen is not recommended for children younger than 6 months.
- Look for playgrounds/ outdoor spaces with shade.
- Bring water (or chilled formula for infants) and encourage children to drink **regularly, even if they don't** feel thirsty.
- Avoid sugary drinks, which increase thirst and cause cavities.
- Stay **within arm's reach** whenever your child is in or near water.
- Open windows at home from the top when possible and **use window guards**. **Don't** rely on screens to prevent children from falling out the window.
- Never leave young children in the car, even with open windows. They can become dangerously overheated within 10 minutes!
- Keep children at least three feet away from a grill.

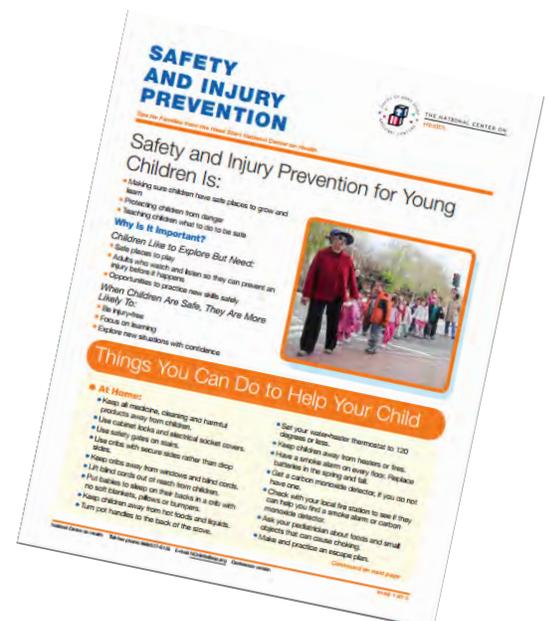
SUPPORTING STAFF

- Provide training and ongoing support to staff on active supervision and safe environments so that they can prevent injuries and know what to do if an injury does occur.
- Be sure the outdoor environment is set up so staff can see and hear children at all times.
- Provide staff with information on the safe and age-appropriate use of sunscreen and insect repellents and be sure that you have parental permission to use these products.
- Provide packs for staff to bring whenever they take children outside the building. In addition to fully stocked first aid kits with all necessary medications and communication devices, staff should carry chilled formula or water for hydration. (Avoid sweet, sugary drinks that can increase thirst and cause cavities.)

You can share the safety measures you take to protect children as you talk with families about outdoor activities their children enjoy at Head Start.

ENGAGING FAMILIES

This is a great time to talk with families about how to keep children safe during summer activities. Ask what outdoor activities they like to do with their children. Be sure to let families know about some of the hazards that are most likely to occur in the summer months, such as drowning, sunburn, and overheating (especially in vehicles). You can share the safety measures you take to protect children as you talk with families about the outdoor activities their children enjoy at Head Start. NCH's [Safety and Injury Prevention: Tips for Families](#) has some useful summer safety tips. See the resources in this newsletter for additional materials to share with families.





WHAT NEXT?

Encourage staff and families to use helmets with an **ASTM, ANSI, or Snell** label to protect toddlers and preschool aged children when they ride wheeled toys. They should be removed when the child is off, as they may be a strangulation hazard.

Encourage families to avoid using sandals or open-toed shoes for their children during active play in the summer months. Shoes with a closed toe and strap around the back are safer.

Make sure children, families, and staff know and practice pedestrian safety.

See [Caring for Our Children, Standard 3.4.5](#) for more information on the use of sunscreen and insect repellants.

See [Caring for Our Children, Standard 6.3.5.3](#) for suggestions on water play areas.



A word about... Heatstroke

Does your program know about [Ray Ray's Pledge](#) and the [Look Before You Lock campaign](#)? Even the most responsible parents can forget a child in the backseat of the car, with tragic consequences. The temperature inside a vehicle can increase rapidly, especially (but not only!) in the summer months. A small child may succumb to heatstroke in even a short time. You can help prevent child deaths by sharing prevention tips with staff and families, and by implementing a child drop off confirmation plan. A simple call to the family if a child does not arrive as scheduled can save a life.

Make a habit of looking in the vehicle—front and back—before locking the door and walking away.

- Where's Baby? Look Before You Lock

RESOURCES

ECLKC RESOURCES:

Active Supervision : <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/active-supervision.pdf>

Tips for Health Managers: Safety and Injury Prevention: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/health-services-management/program-planning/safety-injury-prevention-staff-tips.pdf>

OTHER RESOURCES:

American Academy of Pediatrics, *Summer Safety Tips* (English and Spanish): <http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/pages/Summer-Safety-Tips.aspx>

American Academy of Pediatrics, *Sun and Water Safety Tips* (English and Spanish): <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/pages/Summer-Safety-Tips-Sun-and-Water-Safety.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Moving Outdoors*: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/movingoutdoors/>

Iowa Department of Public Health, *Weather Watch Chart*: <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci/common/pdf/weatherwatch.pdf>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Heatstroke*: <http://www.safercar.gov/parents/heatstroke.htm>

Safe Kids: www.safekids.org

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Burn Safety on Playgrounds*: <http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122121/3200.pdf>

Fostering a culture of health and wellness for Head Start children, families, and staff.

NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH

Our Goal:

To help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement best practices and effective approaches within medical and dental care access, health awareness, healthy active living, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety to support healthy outcomes and school readiness for young children and their families.

CONTACT US!

The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to nchinfo@aap.org or call (888) 227-5125.

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School readiness begins with health!

