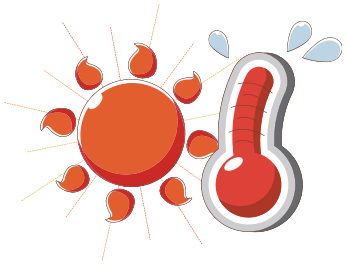
Keeping Your Child Safe in the Summer Heat



As your child heads outside to play this summer, remember that children are especially susceptible to the heat. Below are some tips that will help you keep your child safe:

Keep them hydrated.

Have your child drink a glass of water 1-2 hours before going outside and then another glass 10 to 15 minutes before going out. Once outside, encourage your child to drink about every 20 to 30 minutes, even if he or she isn't thirsty.

Limit outdoor playtime between 11am and 3pm.

The sun reaches its peak during these hours, so try to plan outdoor activities for earlier or later in the day. If children do play outdoors during these hours, make sure they don't overexert themselves.

Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher to protect children from the sun.

Apply sunscreen to your child 30 minutes before going outside to allow it to absorb into the skin. Reapply every two hours. Remember that sunburns can happen even on cloudy days.

Dress your child in loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing

Clothing made from natural fibers like cotton and linen are best, as these fabrics tend to 'breathe' better than synthetic fabrics like polyester. Tightly woven clothing offers additional sun protection.

Know the signs and types of heat stress.

Children do not know or understand the symptoms and will play to exhaustion. There are three types of heat stress:

Heat cramps - Symptoms include mild fever (under 101°F), painful leg cramps, red face, nausea, and weakness. If cramps occur, have your child stop activity and rest, give him or her plenty of clear fluids (sports drinks, preferably), and move the child to a cool area.

Heat exhaustion - Symptoms include lethargy (acting uninterested and/or sluggish); headache; fever up to 102°F; dizziness; heavy sweating; thirst; cool, pale, clammy skin; nausea; vomiting; diarrhea; and anxiety. If you suspect heat exhaustion, take the same steps you would for heat cramps (above), plus give your child a cool bath if possible or wet his or her clothing and call your child's doctor.

Heat Stroke - Fever (sometimes above 105°F), confusion, agitation, hysteria, and no sweating. If you suspect a heat stroke, call 911 immediately and take the steps listed above for heat cramps and heat exhaustion.

NEVER leave a child alone in a car, not even for a minute.

On a 93-degree day, the temperature inside a vehicle can rise to over 125°F in just 20 minutes. To further add to the danger, your child's body heats up 3 to 5 times faster than yours. If your child becomes locked in a vehicle, call 911 *immediately*.

Know your local weather forecast.

Pay attention to your local weather forecast and plan activities based on the day's heat index. A heat index of 80°F or below is considered comfortable; 90°F is beginning to feel uncomfortable; 100°F is uncomfortable and hazardous, and 110°F is dangerous.

Make sure outdoor play equipment and vehicle seats aren't too hot.

Dark car interiors and car seats, metal seatbelt buckles, and metal slides can get especially hot; and children can be burned in just one second.

Sources:

WBAY-TV | Children's Healthcare of Atlanta | Council for Children & Families | HealthyChildren | Iowa Dept. of Public Health

PO Box 55930
Little Rock, AR 72215-5930

SECA

1-800-305-7322
www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org