

# Sun and Water Safety Tips

Keep your family safe this summer by following these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Please feel free to use them in any print or broadcast story with appropriate attribution of source.

## FUN IN THE SUN

Babies under 6 months:

- The two main recommendations from the AAP to prevent sunburn are to avoid sun exposure, and to dress infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and brimmed hats that shade the neck to prevent sunburn. However, when adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least 15 SPF (sun protection factor) to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands. If an infant gets sunburn, apply cool compresses to the affected area.

For All Other Children:

- The first, and best, line of defense against harmful ultraviolet radiation (UVR) exposure is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses (look for sunglasses that provide 97% -100% protection against both UVA and UVB rays), and cotton clothing with a tight weave.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, and limit sun exposure during the peak intensity hours - between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- On both sunny and cloudy days use a sunscreen with an SPF 15 or greater that protects against UVA and UVB rays.
- Be sure to apply enough sunscreen -- about one ounce per sitting for a young adult.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.
- Use extra caution near water and sand (and even snow!) as they reflect UV rays and may result in sunburn more quickly.

## HEAT STRESS IN EXERCISING CHILDREN

- The intensity of activities that last 15 minutes or more should be reduced whenever high heat and humidity reach critical levels.
- At the beginning of a strenuous exercise program or after traveling to a warmer climate, the intensity and duration of exercise should be limited initially and then gradually increased during a period of 7 to 14 days to acclimatize to the heat, particularly if it is very humid.
- Before prolonged physical activity, children should be well-hydrated and should not feel thirsty. For the first hour of exercise, water alone can be used. Kids should have water or a sports drink always available and drink every 20 minutes while exercising in the heat. Excessively hot and humid environments, more prolonged and strenuous exercise, and copious sweating should be reasons for children to substantially increase their fluid intake. After an hour of exercise, children need to drink a carbohydrate-electrolyte beverage to replace electrolytes lost in sweat and provide carbohydrates for energy.
- Clothing should be light-colored and lightweight and limited to one layer of absorbent material to facilitate evaporation of sweat. Sweat-saturated shirts should be replaced by dry clothing.
- Practices and games played in the heat should be shortened and more frequent water/hydration breaks should be instituted. Children should seek cooler environments if they feel excessively hot or fatigued.

## POOL SAFETY

- Never leave children alone in or near the pool or spa, even for a moment.
- 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.
- If the house serves as the fourth side of a fence surrounding a pool, install an alarm on the exit door to the yard and the pool.
- 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 vests and can give children and parents a false sense of security.
- Children ages 1 to 4 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 1- to 4-year-old child in swimming lessons should be made by the parent and based on the child's developmental readiness, but swim programs should never be seen as “drown proofing” a child of any age.
- Whenever infants or toddlers 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.”
- 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.

## **BOATING SAFETY**

- Children should wear life jackets at all times when on boats or near bodies of water.
- Make sure the life jacket is the right size for your child. The jacket should not be loose. It 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 when under the influence of alcohol, drugs, and even some prescription medications.

## **OPEN WATER SWIMMING**

- 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 tides. If you are caught in a rip tide, swim parallel to shore until you escape the current, and then swim back to shore.

For more tips on sun and water safety, visit [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org).

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