

KID Safety



Check Your Car Seat

If you're a parent of young children, you've likely faced the car seat conundrum. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is here to help.

Your child's age and weight will play a factor in whether he needs a booster seat, a forward-facing car seat or a rear-facing car seat.

Once you figure out the correct seat (see recommendations below), the organization recommends you refer to your car seat manufacturer's instructions and owners' manual to properly install the seat.

Here are the highlights from the NHTSA's car seat recommendations for children, who should remain in the back seat at least through age 12:

BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS

Children under the age of 1 should always ride in rear-facing car seats, which come in a variety of types. Infant-only seats can only be used rear-facing, while convertible options typically have higher height and weight limits, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing for a longer period of time.

1 TO 3 YEARS

Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, she is ready to travel in a forward-facing seat with a harness. The NHTSA recommends you keep your child rear-facing for as long as possible, generally until she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your seat's manufacturers.

4 TO 7 YEARS

Your child should remain in a forward-facing seat with a harness until he reaches the maximum allowed height or weight. Once he outgrows the forward-facing seat with a harness, it's time for a booster seat.

8 TO 12 YEARS

Keep your child in a booster seat until she is big enough to fit in a seat belt (the lap belt lies snugly across the upper thighs instead of the stomach.) The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest and not across the neck or face.



Sports Concussions

Since the inception of athletic activities, injuries have always been a part of the game. Some injuries are more serious than others, and concussions are near the top of the list.

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump or blow to the head. Signs of one may not show up until days or even weeks after the injury occurs, which is one of the scariest parts of dealing with a concussion.

Concussions can occur within any sport, so it is important to teach your child safe ways to play without curbing his natural athletic intuition.

THE SIGNS

If your child has experienced a blow to the head, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- Dazed or stunned
- Confusion about game or location
- Forgetful about position or assignment
- Unsure of score or opponent
- Answers questions slowly
- Loss of consciousness, even briefly
- Shows mood, behavior or physical changes

TREATMENT

Concussions simply take time to heal. A health care professional will be able to evaluate and identify the severity of a concussion, as well as when it is safe to return to the playing field.

Following doctor's orders is the safest option for young athletes, even when they are eager to return to action to help their team. Never let your child return to play the day of the injury and until a health care professional says it's OK. Children who return to play too soon risk a greater chance of having a repeat concussion, which could eventually cause permanent brain damage.

PREVENTION

Concussions are very difficult to prevent for athletes playing sports such as football or rugby. New heads-up rules are being instituted throughout youth football to teach children to tackle with the crown of their helmets parallel to their target.



Burn Safety

More than 300 children ages 0 to 19 are treated in emergency rooms every day for burn-related injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Burns are serious injuries not only because of the pain they inflict but also because of the permanent damage they can cause to the skin. Younger children are more likely to sustain injuries from scald burns that are caused by hot liquids or steam, says the CDC, while older children are more likely to sustain injuries from flame burns caused by direct contact with fire.

With a little planning and some common sense, you can help protect children from burns.

BURNS FROM FIRES

Check Your Alarms: Every floor of your home should contain fully charged smoke alarms. Place them near all rooms that family members sleep in and check them once a month to make sure they are working properly.

Set & Discuss an Escape Plan: A mapped out escape route that everyone in the family knows about can make a big difference in your ability to survive a dangerous house fire. You can include your kids in creating and practicing one, making sure that everyone knows at least two ways out of every room.

BURNS FROM HOT WATER

Turn down the heat: You can control the heat of the water coming out of your faucets by simply turning down the temperature of your water heater's thermostat. The CDC recommends you set it to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or lower. This will prevent young children from being burned by water they may not realize is too hot.

Move pot and pan handles: As toddlers stroll past the stovetop, they may be inclined to reach for a pot handle extended across the countertop. Always the adventurous ones, they even may be tempted to grab a stool and stick their hands into scalding water. Be sure to warm your water on the back burners, making it as difficult as possible for children to reach it.



Safety with Pets

Many families aren't complete without the addition of a furry friend. Owning a dog or cat can be a rewarding and educational part of childhood.

It can teach children about responsibility and proper care, while also providing joy and comfort through a special bond.

While there are many positives to owning a pet, it is important to remember that your child's safety comes first. There are simple rules to follow to prevent injuries from bites and scratches, and it is up to you to make sure your child knows – and follows – these rules.

This means no yanking on tails, chasing or cornering the animal, which may react by doing what it can to protect itself. North Shore Animal League, the world's largest no-kill rescue and adoption organization, reminds pet owners that accidents can happen with even the most trustworthy of pets and children.

Here are some tips on maintaining a safe, healthy relationship between your child and pet.

- Never leave a young child unsupervised with an animal under any circumstances. An overly curious pet or child can lead to a dangerous situation that you may not be able to react to quickly enough if you're out of the room.
- Teach your child to never approach any animal, especially when it is eating, sleeping or chewing on a toy.
- Show your child acceptable ways of petting your animal, while also discouraging pulling and tugging.
- Discourage your child from making loud noises or sudden movements when approaching an animal.
- Encourage your child to always ask an adult before approaching an animal he or she doesn't know.
- Restrict any areas containing dog or cat waste, like a litter box. Teach your child that he or she can become very sick from it, and make sure to issue several reminders.
- Don't let your child stand near your dog during times of heightened excitement, including while he or she is running or barking at someone approaching your door. Your child could be pummeled by your anxious pup, leading to bumps and bruises.



Poisonings

Child poisonings occur more often than you may realize, with more than 300 American children sent to the emergency room every day.

That number from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a wake-up call to every parent to make sure all chemicals are properly stored away from children.

But it isn't solely harsh chemicals that parents need to be worried about. Everyday items in your home, such as household cleaners and medicines, can be just as poisonous to children, who may be prone to try to eat or drink unfamiliar items.

LOCK THEM UP

All of your medicines and toxic products should be locked up where children can't see or reach them. Invest in a shelving unit with lockable doors to store all of your cleaning supplies. Keeping them under the sink is asking for disaster to strike, since this is at ground level and within reach of a curious toddler.

KNOW YOUR LABELS

The CDC recommends you never remove original packaging from medicine or cleaners. Doing so can confuse you as to what medicine you're actually taking or administering, which can lead to potentially dangerous situations.

When giving medicine to children, it is important to fol-

low the label directions closely. Even a small mistake can lead to a potential overdose situation that could send you and your child to the hospital.

POISON CONTROL CENTER

Keep the nationwide Poison Center phone number, 800-

222-1222, handy everywhere you regularly spend time, as well as in your purse or wallet and programmed into your cell phone.

Call the Poison Center if you think a child has been poisoned but he is awake and alert. The center can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 911 if you

have a poison emergency and your child has collapsed or is not breathing.

DON'T NEED IT? DUMP IT

You should always safely dispose of unused, unneeded or expired prescription drugs and over-the-counter

drugs, vitamins and supplements. The CDC recommends disposing of medicines by mixing them with coffee grounds or kitty litter and throwing them away. Many local and state organizations host take-back days that all you to dispose of medication safely and confidentially.



Away at Camp

Taking part in an annual camp can be one of the most exciting parts of a child's summer. There are nature walks, cookouts and up-all-night summer fun.

Camp has long provided many staples of American childhood and should be experienced by any child seeking some adventure and camaraderie.

But before you pack a bag and send your child off to summer camp, you should take some precautions to ensure that the trip is both fun and safe.

RESEARCH THE CAMP

As a responsible parent, you should get to know what medical and safety services are available at the camp. According to recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, a safe camp will make public its written health policies and protocols.

All children attending a quality camp should be required to have had a complete exam by a doctor in the past year and be up to date on all childhood shots. Before camp starts, parents should make sure camp officials understand any health issues the child has, as well as past significant illnesses, operations, injuries and allergies.

It also is important to find out if the camp has nurses or other medical personnel on site. Is there a place your child



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will be able to go if she doesn't feel well? What are the caregiver's credentials and background in treating children? These are critical questions to ask camp officials before sending your child there.

HOMESICKNESS

The stress of being away from home should be a serious consideration before enrolling your child in summer camp. Eight out of 10 campers report

being homesick at least one day at camp, according to American Camping Association statistics. Less than 10 percent of those cases result in the child becoming so anxious or depressed that he stops eating

or sleeping, the ACA says.

You know your child best, so if she has struggled with leaving your company in the past, maybe a short day camp is good way of testing readiness for the overnight variety.

Safe at School

Your child deserves to feel safe and secure in every setting, especially at school. Positive interactions with teachers, staff, administrators and fellow students are critical to forming an optimal learning environment.

So what can you do to make sure you're sending your child into the safest situation possible? It starts with regular, healthy conversation between you and your child.

Instead of saying "Tell me about your day," ask specific questions about a certain class, recess activity or lunch.

Encourage your child to report to a teacher or principal when someone they know is being bullied. As far as your own child being picked on, it is up to you to notice the warning signs, such as loss of interest in school, a sudden drop in grades or even torn clothing.

DISCOURAGE FIGHTING

Every student will likely at one point face adversity or a bullying situation during his school career. It is crucial to teach your child ways to deal with confrontations in a non-violent manner.

Some ways to diffuse fights are talking out problems, telling a trusted adult or simply walking away. By teaching your child to rule out physical confrontation, you are keeping her safe from abuse and trouble with teachers, as well as from bodily harm.

SAFETY EMERGENCY PLANS

As much as we don't want to think about dangerous situations like school shootings or natural disasters, the fact is they can happen at any school. How we prepare our children – and how schools institute safety policies – can make all the difference between survival and serious injury.

Don't be afraid to ask about the safety and emergency plans for your child's school. Set a meeting with the school's expert on emergencies and inquire about what types of emergencies are planned for within the safety policy book.

Offer your ideas on emergency preparedness in a positive, collaborative manner. Parent involvement is healthy for any school, and administrators will appreciate your concerns.

