

Kids Safety



Fire Safety Tips

Kids should be educated early, since they can be curious about open flames.

Discussing the dangers should be paired with developing a plan for what to do should a fire break out — at home or on vacation.

HAVE A PLAN

Experiencing a fire is understandably one of everybody's worst nightmares, but things can turn even more tragic if families don't have a plan in place. Hundreds of children die in house fires each year, according to statistics from Safe Kids Worldwide. There's also a danger when you're on vacation, since the pathway to safety can be unknown. Make a plan for your family to escape in the event of a fire, discussing multiple exit points from your home or hotel room. In both cases, establish a place to meet up that's a safe distance away so that everyone knows where to go after escaping. This will also serve as an early alert to look for anyone who may still be inside. Practice your escape, both at home and at the hotel.

EVERYDAY DANGERS

Children should be taught about the everyday dangers that surround us, including matches, space heaters, lighters and other accelerants. When possible, store away potentially risky items in high, out-of-reach places so that



© ADOBE STOCK

small children can't reach them, but not before making it clear that they are not toys. Any of these things can inadvertently start a fire if improperly used. It's important to also talk to them about the risks of burns around the house, in particular in kitchens. Children should be kept

at least three feet away from hot cooktops, toaster ovens and stoves.

VACATION RISKS

Show children the maps that are posted on the back of hotel rooms which outline how to escape, then take them along that route. When camping,

either on a site or in the backyard, be aware of the dangers associated with building a fire to roast marshmallows. General safety guidelines to share with kids include keeping fires at least 15 feet away from tents, trees and other shrubbery. Don't build fires under tree canopies or low-

slung branches. Use designated fire pits when possible; otherwise, children should be tasked with helping to build a containment area with stones. Finally, show them how to properly extinguish a fire by shoveling dirt on top. Never leave a fire unattended, even if it's only smoldering.

Beware of Food Allergies

Sometimes, our bodies overreact to various foods as if they're harmful.

These allergies can be particularly alarming for parents, as tiny immune systems try to fight off phantom dangers.

Worse still, these allergies may be initially unknown, as kids try new foods. They're hard to diagnose, and are afflicting a growing number of children. As many as one in 13 U.S. citizens who are 18 and under may be suffering, according to the Food Allergy Research and Education Network. There are risk factors and key symptoms to look out for, but also some good news about introducing allergens early in life.

RISK FACTORS

Parents with food allergies should be aware that this is a primary risk factor for their children. The same is true if a child has siblings with these allergies. In fact, being related to those who have common issues like hay fever, eczema and allergic asthma may also make children more apt to have adverse reactions to food.

KEY SYMPTOMS

Part of what makes identifying and treating food allergies so difficult is how varied the responses can be. Symptoms may appear within minutes or develop hours after consumption – and the symptoms vary. Children



© ADOBE STOCK

might be dealing with itchy or painful rashes on their skin, a runny nose, swelling of the lips, tongue or throat, wheezing and abdominal pain. In some cases, kids aren't actually allergic but simply have a far-less-dangerous intolerance to certain foods. Though often uncomfortable, this response isn't based in the immune system.

COMMON ALLERGENS

Consuming any food can lead to an allergic reaction, depending on the person. But some allergic reactions are more common with kids. The vast majority of their reactions involve the same eight allergens, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: peanuts, wheat, cow's milk, soy, tree

nuts, eggs, fish and shellfish. So take extra caution when introducing these foods for the first time with kids.

STAYING ON GUARD

Children's initial diet should consist of foundational items like pureed fruits and vegetables, cereals and meats. They typically shift to solid foods after reaching four- to six-

months old – or later, depending on their own readiness. Discuss diet choices with your pediatrician, and stay on guard through the process. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology confirms that introducing potential allergens within this first year can reduce the risk of developing food allergies later in life.

The Rise of Cyber-Bullying

Growing up has gotten more difficult as bullies follow kids home.

Problems with classmates used to remain on campus, until the digital age placed them on a phone in children's pockets.

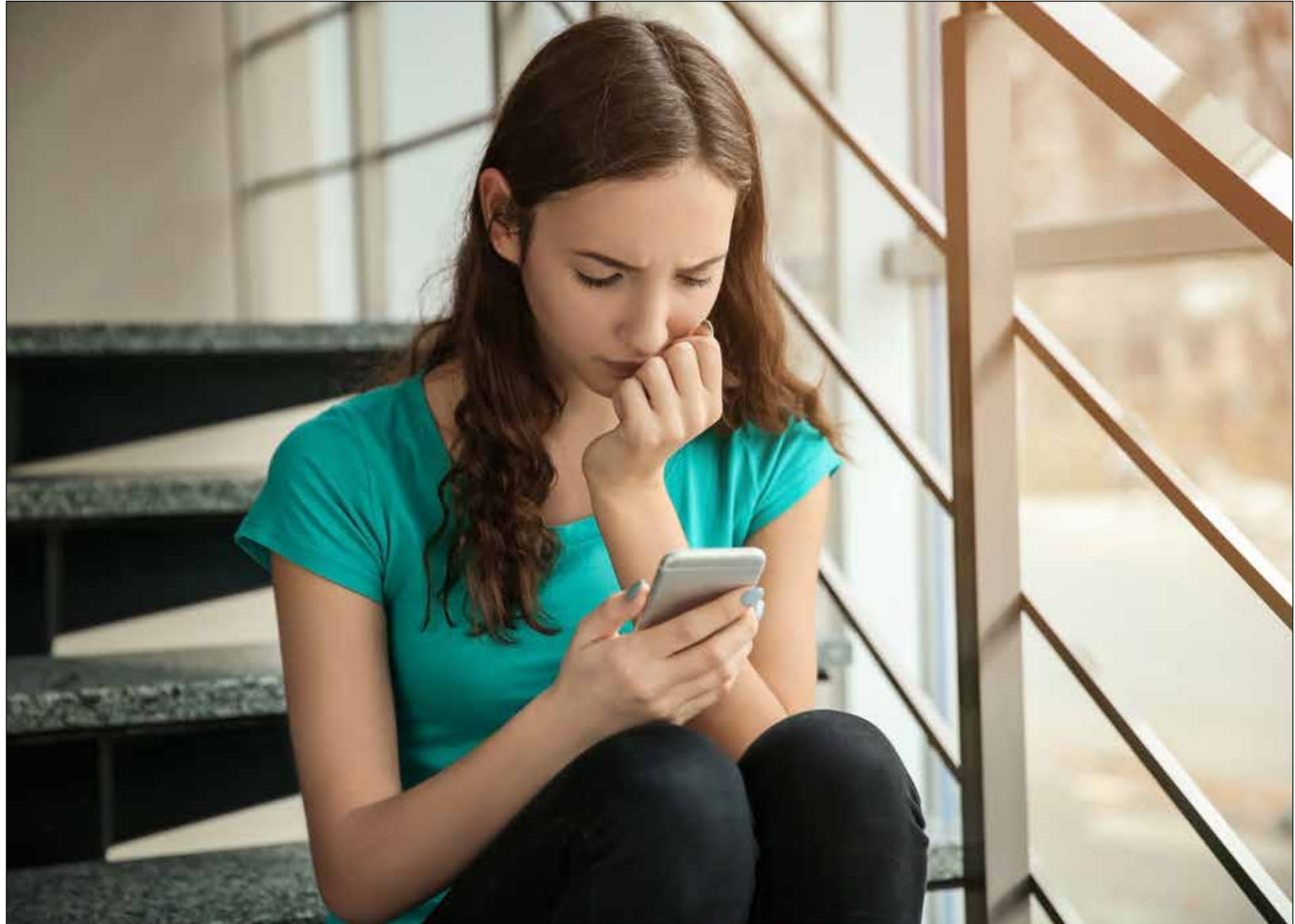
It's never been harder to keep a child safe from bullying, since it can happen anytime and anywhere. New sites and apps are developed every day to reach young people, providing an avenue into kid's lives for hurtful comments, shaming and other forms of intimidation.

A GROWING ISSUE

The number of kids who have been cyber-bullied is racing toward 50%, according to an organization called Do Something that tracks bullying and promotes positive change. Almost a quarter of the children surveyed said they'd been bullied online more than once. The reason seems clear: More than 80% of young people acknowledge that it's easier to bully someone online than in person. The Internet encourages an arm's-length approach to communicating, and in some cases complete anonymity. The practical effect can be dehumanizing.

HOW IT HAPPENS

Over time, specific types of bullying have become most common in the online com-



© ADOBE STOCK

munity. They often involve leveraging unique characteristics of the internet in order to maximize harm. Classmates may choose a form of impersonation, since social platforms make it so easy to assume a different identity. This allows bullies to operate anonymously and from a distance. Stalking is another common form of cyber-bully-

ing, as someone begins to feel constantly monitored and harassed. Flaming involves gathering with two or more other bullies in order to gang up on someone. Sharing personal details or other sensitive information in an attempt to embarrass someone is known as outing, while trolling involves trying to confuse or annoy someone by constantly

bothering them.

WHAT TO DO

Bullying has always been difficult to prevent. Cyberbullying, by its very nature, is even harder since we live in an always-connected world. Kids may not volunteer the information, out of embarrassment or shame. Open lines of discussion. Be aware

of who their friends are, and seek out parents so that they're in the loop, as well. Discuss their interactions with people at school who aren't friends, and if they ever feel uncomfortable. Be prepared to talk about negative interactions, and to report the situation to parents and school administrators if the situation becomes more serious.

Playground Safety

A fun day at your local park can easily lead to the emergency room.

More than 200,000 children are rushed to the hospital annually with playground-related injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In some cases, these mishaps are nothing more than sprains, bruises or scrapes. In others, however, kids suffer concussions, broken bones and traumatic injuries to the brain. The CDC estimates that there are about 20,000 of those injuries each year.

WHERE INJURIES HAPPEN

Danger may lurk there, but it doesn't mean we should avoid the local playground. Instead, understand where and how these mishaps occur so you can head them off. Roughly two-thirds of brain injuries, for instance, involve monkey bars, swings and climbing equipment. In fact, more injuries of all types happen around this equipment than elsewhere at public playgrounds. Talk to kids about these dangers, and pay close attention when they're playing in this area.

THE PERFECT SPOT

Kids are sometimes injured because of inadequate cushioning around places where they may jump or inadvertently fall. Maintenance



© ADOBE STOCK

issues and poor design can play a role, too. Inspect any equipment before letting kids play, since well-maintained parks pose less risk. Rust and disrepair leads to lots of poor health care outcomes, too. Look for parks that have installed soft material in places where kids may fall, like mulch, wood chips or sand. The National Program for

Playground Safety has come up with a catchy acronym to describe a perfect park experience: S.A.F.E., which stands for Supervision, Age appropriate design, Fall surface cushioning, and Equipment Safety.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make sure kids are dressed for the part, meaning no neck-

laces, drawstrings or scarves that might get caught in equipment. Pay close attention to age suggestions at the park to make sure kids are playing in areas where they're meant to be. Be aware of trip hazards like limbs, rocks or stumps – and point them out to children. Check that guardrails are in good working condition, and look for sharp

points or edges. But most of all, simply pay attention. Younger children require active supervision, so don't think of a trip to the park as an opportunity to scroll through your phone. Remind kids of the playground rules, be prepared to mediate any disagreements and make sure they take plenty of water breaks.

Avoid Choking Hazards

It's still one of the leading causes of accidental child death and injury.

Many choking incidents involve toys and coins, but the vast majority are food related. In fact, more than 50%.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has released a series of reports and surveys to help parents understand how often these incidents occur, the risks and how to avoid them.

MEAL-TIME DANGER

Kids are at a particular risk of choking while eating, so keep a close eye on them at meal time. Begin by making sure that all of their food is cut in small, bite-sized portions. Teach them to chew their food slowly and completely, not to talk while eating and never to eat too quickly. They also shouldn't be allowed to leave the table with food in their mouths, since there are dangers associated with playing, laying down, and walking or running.

CHOKING RISKS

Keep choking hazards off of low counters and the floor, storing them where young children can't reach them. Make sure the toys you buy are age appropriate, since general safety standards are meant to take into account whether the product presents a danger of choking.



© ADOBE STOCK

Understand, too, that your child may be bringing potential choking hazards home from school or the daycare center, so check pockets, backpacks and purses when they return. You're basically looking for anything small. Among the most things that kids end up choking on are buttons, earrings, stones,

pins and tacks; coins and small lithium batteries; toys with small removable parts and toys that are small enough to be swallowed; marbles, refrigerator magnets, balloons and the caps from pens or markers; barrettes, hair bows and rubber bands; hard candy and chewing gum; and grapes, peanuts or

other nuts, cubed cheese, popcorn and seeds, among other things.

WHAT TO DO

Familiarize yourself with the Heimlich maneuver so that you can rush to their aid should a child begin to choke. There are slight variations on this life-saving technique,

depending on the age of the child. Secure cords attached to blinds away from little hands, and move cribs, furniture and beds back from the windows in your home. Seek immediate medical attention if a child swallows things like a magnet, since that can lead to vomiting, nausea, abdominal pain and diarrhea.

Dealing With Peer Pressure

Classmates begin influencing kids as soon as they enroll in school.

On the plus side, they might hear about a new band. But then there are more concerning behaviors.

Kids in some cases may be encouraged to skip class, cheat on tests, use alcohol, vape or do drugs, share inappropriate online material and participate in bullying behavior. Because they hope to fit in, peer pressure may lead them down these wrong paths.

WHY IT WORKS

This pressure may be as subtle as encouragement to dress and talk in a manner that the group deems acceptable. In other instances, kids may be directly pressured to do something that's out of character in an effort to please friends. Young people have only just begun making these kind of connections outside of their immediate family, and sometimes arrive with too much trust. At their best, these interactions allow them to learn more about emerging fashion trends or a book. But there's a darker side to not wanting to be left out, if the friends they've made are making bad choices.

WHAT KIDS CAN DO

Common reasons why kids give into peer pressure include a fear of being rejected, wanting to avoid judgment or



© ADOBE STOCK

embarrassment, a need to belong, seeking popularity, and a simple desire to experiment and try new things. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry recommends that kids stay away from those who begin pressuring them toward negative behaviors, while connecting with others who choose to go

their own way. Practice saying no when feeling uncomfortable or unsafe. Discuss any issue with trusted grown-ups like family members, school counselors or a teacher.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Create as strong a bond as possible with your child. Talk to them daily about successes

and challenges at school, and in life. Different strategies may be more effective with different children, but it's all built on a foundation of trust. Get to know their friends, and encourage your child to meet new people. Keep an open mind, so that they'll feel comfortable talking about difficult topics. Don't stress over small-

er changes, including the way they might dress. Instead focus on decisions that pose the biggest risks. Talk about being true to one's self, and expressing individuality. Develop spoken exchanges and exit strategies that can be employed if they find themselves in uncomfortable situations.

Staying Safe Around Animals

Kids love animals, but they may be putting themselves in danger.

There are more than 4 million animal bites every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many are children.

Nearly 90% of those bites are from dogs. Kids are particularly prone to those bites, mainly because they aren't yet able to understand physical cues that the animal is agitated. Cats account for five to 10%, while the rest are from other animals.

STAYING SAFE

Dogs may be man's best friend, but that doesn't mean every individual dog is friendly. Some may want to be petted while others are more territorial. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has put together a tip sheet on how to keep kids safe around dogs. They should always ask permission before petting an unfamiliar dog. Stay away from a dog's toys and especially its food. Never pull on their leash, or tease a dog. Leave mothers alone with their puppies, as they may view others as a threat. Children should be instructed to stand still if a loose dog runs up to them. Should they be knocked to the ground, have kids practice curling into a ball while covering their ears.



© ADOBE STOCK

IF THEY'RE BITTEN

Immediately wash out the wound if your child is bitten by an animal, using warm and soapy water. Seek medical attention if you don't know the rabies vaccination status of the animal, if the animal appears to be sick, or if the wound is serious

enough that there is profuse bleeding. Monitor the wound and go to the doctor if it becomes swollen or red. You should also get medical attention if it's been more than five years since the last tetanus shot.

OTHER RISKS

The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention specifically recommends that kids under five avoid contact with reptiles, amphibians, backyard poultry and rodents because of the risk of illness. Other risks associated with animals include contamination from feces, a particular problem for the youngest children who may inadvertently

touch unclean surfaces and then put their hands in their mouths. Closely supervise your children when they are around animals, making sure that they do not kiss the animals or put their hands in their mouths after petting them. Always wash hands thoroughly after any time spent with animals.