

Nursing Needle

When the weather is warm, we want to be outside. The sun does good things like make the flowers and plants grow. It even gives us Vitamin D to help us absorb Calcium for strong bones. But it also sends down ultraviolet rays. When skin is exposed to these UV rays, it can turn into a sunburn. Sunburns hurt and can even cause blistering. Frequent damage to the skin can lead to wrinkles and skin cancer as we get older. To prevent a sunburn, wear sunscreen and reapply frequently. Take frequent sun breaks and rest in the shade or go indoors. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Avoid exercising on a hot day and don't forget to protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses.

Outdoor activities can be fun, but have some danger involved. Safety precautions must be met to make sure the activities don't turn into a doctor's or hospital visit. Protective gear must be used and rules must be established and discussed so our children remain safe.

Bicycle safety is essential. **Always wear a helmet.** You cannot predict if or when an injury will occur. It's important to wear a helmet on every ride. Establish this rule early and reinforce this message by having all family members wear their helmets. The helmet provides protection to the head and brain in case you fall down. It should fit properly, not too small and not too big. It should be worn level on the head and cover the forehead. The straps should always be fastened and fit snugly enough that you can't pull or twist the helmet around your head. The bike itself should also be the right size. To find the right size, you should stand straddling the top bar of the bike so that both feet are flat on the ground. Wear bright clothes and ensure that reflectors are on the bike so that motorists can see you from any distance. Never wear sandals, flip flops or go barefoot as your feet will not grip the pedal and may slip off into the spokes. Do not wear headphones because music can distract you from noises around you such as honking car horns. Talk to your children on where they are allowed to ride. Stay on sidewalks or bike lanes unless told otherwise. Keep an eye out for cars and trucks, especially those pulling out of their driveways. In all cases, walk your bike across the street and follow all traffic signals. The rules of the road are established to protect the bicycle rider. Parents should teach the importance of why these rules exist. Bikes are vehicles, not toys. We love and value our children and their intelligence and it is our job to protect them. Not wearing a helmet can permanently hurt their brains or even lead to death by head injury. **Helmets can save lives.**

Skateboards, scooters, and inline skates have also become popular outdoor activities. These activities also have their own risks. In a study in April 2005, 1 in 7 kids seen in the ER were there with fractures of the wrist, elbow and lower legs, due to skateboarding, inline skates and using scooters. Protective equipment for these activities should require a helmet, elbow and knee pads. The rules are the same as for riding a bike. Discussions about the risks of injury and the peer pressure influences to avoid protective equipment as it may be "uncool" should occur. Reminding kids that great sports heroes, like Tony Hawk, wear protective equipment and he is "cool" may break that stigma.

Swimming is another summer fun activity. But it also has dangerous risks. Death by drowning is the 2nd most common cause of death from injuries among kids under age 14. Most of this is due to accidentally slipping and falling into a pool. Drowning victims cannot cry or shout for help and this can happen sometimes in less than 2 minutes. To help prevent this: establish and enforce pool rules. Gated pools are there for a reason to keep unsupervised children out. Obey these rules. A supervised child is in sight at all times with your undivided attention focused on the child. Don't run around a pool and swim at a safe depth for your ability to swim. Don't push, jump, or hold another person under the water. Don't eat or chew gum while swimming, choking can occur. If learning to swim, use US Coast Guard approved life vest. Don't use the blow up toys, water wings or mattress in place of life vest as it can give a false sense of security and it can be dangerous if it suddenly deflates or a child falls off. Most importantly, **take a CPR class.**

Preparation for summer activities can take little time compared to the time involved when an injury occurs. Talk to your children about the dangers of their activity and the safety measures to prevent related injuries. By following simple safety precautions, your family can enjoy various summer activities and prevent awful disasters.

Have a safe and injury free summer, see you next year

Nurse Brandon