



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PLAYING IT SAFE THIS SUMMER

Tom Courtney, M.D. offers advice on keeping kids healthy and safe while enjoying the outdoors

FRANKLIN, Tenn. – June 19, 2009 – School has been out for several weeks and children have been taking advantage of the carefree days of summer by swimming at the pool, playing on trampolines, bicycling, roller blading and enjoying many other outdoor activities.

Unfortunately, these activities sometimes lead to more visits to the doctor for sunburns, tick bites, burns, cuts, broken bones and more. Outdoor fun and exercise are vital to your child's health and should be encouraged. However, teaching your child basic prevention and safety is vital to their enjoyment of these activities.

Following is a list of safety tips that should help you and your family enjoy your summers safely for years to come. It is modified from similar guidelines that can be found on the American Academy of Pediatrics Web site at www.aap.org.

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Protecting your children's skin from damage

Babies under six months:

- Avoid sun exposure, and dress infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and brimmed hats that shade the neck to prevent sunburn. 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 young children:

- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF should be at least 15 and protect against UVA and UVB rays. It also should

be PABA free since many children are allergic to this ingredient.

For older children:

- The first, and best, line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses (look for sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet 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.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater. Be sure to apply enough - 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 as they reflect UV rays and may result in sunburn more quickly.

POOL SAFETY

- Install a fence at least four-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.
- Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment.
- 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 a false sense of security.
- Children may not be developmentally ready for swim lessons until after their fourth birthday. Swim programs for children under 4 should not be seen as a way to decrease the risk of drowning.
- Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."

PREVENTING INSECT BITES

- Don't use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on your child.
- Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom.

- Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.
- To remove a visible stinger from skin, gently scrape it off horizontally with a credit card or your fingernail.
- Combination sunscreen/insect repellent products should be avoided because sunscreen needs to be reapplied every two hours, but the insect repellent should not be reapplied.
- Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective against ticks, which can transmit Lyme Disease and other dangerous diseases, and mosquitoes, which can transmit West Nile Virus amongst other viruses.
- The current CDC and AAP recommendation for children over 2 months of age is to use less than 30 percent DEET. DEET should not be used on children under 2 months of age.
- The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product, so read the label of any product you purchase. Children should wash off repellents when back indoors.
- Products are available containing the compound Permethrin that is applied to clothing, never skin, to repel insects for several weeks. Read product directions carefully and only use as directed.
- Avoid activities in the early morning around day break and in the late evening around dusk as lots of insects including mosquitoes are more active at these times.

BICYCLE SAFETY

- Do not push your child to ride a 2-wheeled bike until he or she is ready, at about age 5 or 6. Consider the child's coordination and desire to learn to ride. Stick with coaster (foot) brakes until your child is older and more experienced for hand brakes.
- Take your child with you when you shop for the bike, so that he or she can try it out. The value of a properly fitting bike far outweighs the value of surprising your child with a new one.
- Buy a bike that is the right size, not one your child has to "grow into." Oversized bikes are especially dangerous.
- Your child needs to wear a helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short or how close to home. Many accidents happen in driveways, on sidewalks, and on bike paths, not just on streets. Children learn best by observing you. Whenever you ride, put on your helmet.
- When purchasing a helmet, look for a label or sticker that says the helmet meets the CPSC safety standard.
- A helmet should be worn so that it is level on the head, not tipped forwards or backwards.

The strap should be securely fastened, and you should not be able to move the helmet in any direction. If needed, the helmet's sizing pads can help improve the fit.

SKATEBOARD, SCOOTER, IN-LINE SKATING AND HEELYS SAFETY

- Children should never ride skateboards or scooters in or near traffic.
- All skateboarders and scooter-riders should wear a helmet and other protective gear; wrist guards are particularly important.
- Communities should continue to develop skateboard parks, which are more likely to be monitored for safety than ramps and jumps constructed by children at home.
- While in-line skating or wearing Heelys, be sure to wear appropriate protective equipment and only skate on designated paths or rinks and not on the street.

Source: Modified from American Academy of Pediatrics <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/summertips.cfm>

About Mercy Children's Clinic

Mercy Children's Clinic is a Franklin-based nonprofit organization that provides primary pediatric and mental healthcare to children from all socio-economic backgrounds including children without health insurance or enrolled in TennCare. The clinic has a staff of more than 40, including eight pediatricians and a psychiatrist. Since 1999, more than 9,400 children from 31 counties in Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama have called Mercy Children's Clinic their medical home. For additional information visit www.MercyChildrensClinic.org or call 615.790.0567.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Amy Gray, APR
Gray Public Relations
615.497.1799
agray@graypr.com

Jessica Perry
Community Relations Specialist
Mercy Children's Clinic
615.804.6397
Jessica@MercyChildrensClinic.org

###