

Beware: Summer is dangerous for children

6.19.12

Every summer, approximately 2.7 million children in the U.S. are treated for accidental injuries, and nearly 3,000 of those children die, says [Dr. Matthew Denenberg](#), chief of pediatric emergency medicine at [Helen DeVos Children's Hospital](#) in Grand Rapids.

We are well aware of the more obvious summer threats — [bee stings](#), [sunburns](#) and [swimming accidents](#), for example — but other dangers are lurking about as well, like these:

Dehydration

“Any outdoor activity can dry you out,” says Veronica McVicker, a registered nurse with [Roper St. Francis Healthcare](#). “Your body is made up mostly of water and can react drastically to losing too much of it.” If your child is thirsty, he is already on his way to being dehydrated!

“Add fresh fruit — strawberries, lime slices or even cucumber slices — to give a new twist to an ice cold drink. Or try a trendy [coconut water](#).”

Heat rash (Miliaria)

Heat rash, or prickly heat, occurs when sweat gets trapped in the sweat glands, resulting in red, itchy bumps on the skin.

“The key to treating miliaria is to cool the skin down to allow the sweat glands to unclog,” says Dr. Joshua Zeichner, director of cosmetic and clinical research at Mt. Sinai Medical Center. “Put your child into a cool environment with air conditioning and apply cool compresses to the skin. Loose-fitting clothes help the skin return to normal, usually within a few hours to days.”

Food poisoning

Outdoor parties can mean undercooked hamburgers, tainted potato salad and E. coli. “Protect against food-borne illness,” says ‘The Safety Expert’ [Debra Holtzman](#). “Use a [meat thermometer](#) to make sure hamburgers are cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160F.

“And don’t leave perishables (like [coleslaw](#)) at room temperature for more than two hours when bacteria can grow to harmful levels,” Holtzman adds. “If it is a hot day, play it safe and refrigerate them within an hour.”

Falls from windows

“Ensure that your young children are safe around windows in the summer,” advise the experts at Champion Windows. “Window screens have one purpose: to keep insects out while providing ventilation. They won’t prevent a toddler falling through an open window.”

Over 5,000 children under the age of 10 fall from windows every year. Consider installing a safety mechanism on your windows, such as the fire fighter-friendly [Guardian Angel Window Guard](#) from [Safe Tots.com](#) (prices vary).

Lyme Disease

“Use [bug spray](#) to minimize bites, especially in the early morning and early evening,” says [dermatology expert Dr. Rebecca Baxt](#). “Check your kids every night for ticks. If you see one, call the pediatrician.

“Ticks can be removed and saved to test,” adds Dr. Baxt. “If it has been attached for less than 24 to 48 hours, the chance of getting Lyme disease is remote, but some kids need prophylactic treatment with antibiotics, so call your doctor.”

Car suffocation

“Leaving babies and small children in cars is a huge danger,” says child passenger safety technician Sheneq Aranda, founder and CEO of Premier Baby Planning. When summer comes along, and you’re out of your regular routine, it can happen more easily than you think.

“The temperature inside a vehicle rises so quickly that a child can be dead in 10 minutes,” warns Aranda. “Keep your handbag or cell phone in the back seat so it becomes a routine to check there before you exit the vehicle.”

