



5 TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR KIDS THIS SUMMER

Summertime is outdoor time, with plenty of daylight and things to keep your kids occupied. Unfortunately, these months are also the peak injury season for children, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). But, the good news is, [you can increase your child's odds of an accident-free summer.](#)

A crowded, but unpopular vacation spot

The urgent care center or emergency room (ER) should be at the bottom of your “must-see” list this summer. Consider going to your doctor or an urgent care center for these non-emergency conditions:

- twisted ankles
- coughs, colds, sore throats
- minor skin rashes or ear infections
- minor burns
- minor cuts and bruises
- minor asthma-related symptoms
- minor animal bites where bleeding is controlled
- fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

When to choose the Emergency Room

If you choose an emergency room, it's likely to be crowded, noisy and scary for your child, and the wait will probably eat up a good portion of your day or night. Even if the injury is minor, expect to be hit with some hefty charges to top off your trip – about three to four times more than a doctor's office visit. If you choose an emergency room inappropriately, your insurance may not pay for it.

Of course, if the injury is serious or life-threatening, the ER is your best choice, especially for the following conditions:

- severe abdominal pain
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- sudden dizziness, weakness or loss of coordination or balance
- sudden blurred vision
- numbness in the face, arm, or leg
- sudden, severe headache
- deep cuts or bleeding that won't stop
- coughing up or vomiting blood
- serious burns
- seizures
- loss of consciousness
- poisoning
- bad reaction to an insect bite or to a medication, especially if breathing is difficult
- major injury, such as a head trauma
- broken bones where the bone is showing or the limb is deformed

Unfortunately, even with sensible precautions, you still might find yourself in the emergency room. Here are a few sobering facts to put things in perspective:

- From 1993 to 2003, infants' visits to the ER increased by 23 percent, and teenagers' visits went up by 32 percent.
- An average wait at the ER in the summer can be as long as 8 to 12 hours.
- Accidents are the main reason young people seek urgent or emergency care.
- In 2004, 20 million children were seen in the ER.
- Each day, 1,000 kids go to the hospital just for bike injuries. That's more than 350,000 visits a year.

Simple tips for a safer summer

What can you do to lessen your chances of making an urgent care or ER visit? Follow these summer safety tips from the CPSC:

- **Helmets:** Make sure your child wears a helmet when biking, skating, skateboarding, or riding scooters, ATVs, or horses. Studies show helmets can reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85 percent.
- **Water safety:** Use gates, alarms, and close supervision around swimming pools, and don't let your child wander away from shore when you're at the beach. Even good swimmers should be watched closely in ocean waters.
- **Safe playgrounds:** Keep your home playground safe with at least nine inches of wood chips or mulch. Falls cause 60 percent of playground injuries, and concrete, asphalt, or packed dirt surfaces are too hard to provide adequate cushion.

- **Sports safety:** Use softer-than-standard baseballs, safety-release bases, and batting helmets with face guards. For soccer parents, make sure the soccer goal is anchored securely at all times. Moveable soccer goals can fall over and cause serious injury or death.
- **Trampoline safety:** Use safety netting, if possible. Use spotters for unnetted trampolines and allow only one person at a time. Use a shock-absorbing pad to cover the springs, and place the trampoline away from other structures.

Who do you call?

You can't anticipate every situation, so it's important to know in advance what to do when you're faced with a sick or injured child. Call your child's doctor. He or she may suggest treatment over the phone, ask you to bring the child to the office, or direct you to the nearest urgent care center. If you cannot reach your physician, and the situation is urgent, go straight to either urgent care or the ER. Call 911 if you need help getting your child to the emergency room.

Find out more about safety for children – including burn prevention, car seats, playground safety, and poison prevention – in the Health Center for Children on MyHumana, your password-protected personal page at Humana.com.

Bottom Line:

Summer brings added risk of injury for your children. Take some simple safety precautions and avoid the trauma, time, cost, and inconvenience of a trip to the emergency room or urgent care center. You'll find many safety suggestions on www.cpsc.gov.