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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District



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Outdoor Injury Prevention Starts in Your Own Back Yard

Safe Kids Champaign County Offers Yard Safety Tips

Each of five major child injury hazards — motor vehicles, drowning, burns, falls and poison — can be found in the back yard during the summer. Riding mowers, inflatable pools, home playground equipment and even natural vegetation and sunlight require a few simple precautions.

“All of the safety guidelines you apply to sports, playgrounds and swimming apply to those activities in your own back yard,” says Susan Butler, Safe Kids Champaign County coordinator. “An inflatable pool needs to be surrounded by a fence, just like any other pool. A home playground needs to be anchored on an appropriate surface just like equipment on a public playground.”

Kiddie pools should be emptied when not in use. “Kiddie pools are just as dangerous to a small child as full-size pools — a child can drown in just a few inches of water,” says Butler.

Safe Kids offers detailed guidelines about pool safety and playground safety at www.usa.safekids.org. In addition, Safe Kids Champaign County recommends these precautions for activities in the back yard:

- Always supervise your children in the back yard or at playgrounds. Make sure they play on a safe surface, such as mulch, rubber or fine sand.
- Treat a riding mower like any other motor vehicle: keep ignition keys out of reach and look around before backing up. Never carry children as passengers on a lawnmower; children should stay in the house whenever a mower or other power equipment is being used. Children should be at least 12 years old before they operate any lawn mower, and at least 16 years old for a ride-on mower.

- Allow children to perform age-appropriate yard work only under supervision. Don't allow a child to attempt tasks inappropriate for his or her age, size, strength, cognitive ability or prior experience.
- Make sure your children wear a properly fitting helmet and other protective gear every time they ride their bikes, scooters, skateboards, rollerblades, and other wheeled toys.
- Remove potential poisons from your yard, including poisonous plants, pesticides and pool chemicals. Teach kids not to handle or eat any part of a plant unless you know it is safe.
- Keep children away from the grill area while preheating and cooking and while the grill is cooling.
- Following the manufacturer's instructions carefully, apply insect repellent to a child's clothing and exposed skin. (Check with your pediatrician if you have any questions about the instructions.)
- Teach children not to disturb or feed any wild animals, no matter how harmless the animals may seem.
- Apply sunscreen rated SPF 15 or higher to your child's exposed skin 15 to 30 minutes before going out, and reapply frequently. (It is possible to get a sunburn in cloudy conditions.)
- Make sure your child drinks plenty of water. A child who seems tired or achy should rest in the shade or go inside for a while. Get immediate medical help any time a child's skin is hot to the touch (with or without perspiration) or if a child has a seizure or becomes disoriented in hot weather.

For more information about summer safety, call 217-531-4268 or visit www.usa.safekids.org.

Safe Kids Champaign County works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Safe Kids Champaign County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Champaign County was founded in 1996 and is led by Champaign-Urbana Public Health District.

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