

KID
Safety



Teach Safety, Not Fear

It's obviously very important to talk to your kids about safety in a variety of ways, but it's equally important to do it in a way they can understand that doesn't cause undue fear and anxiety.

KidPower notes that young people are at risk of many dangers, including abuse, bullying, assault and abduction, and parents should absolutely speak to their children about the threats that exist.

UNDERSTAND CONTEXT

The report notes parents, teachers and other caregivers need to be aware their children are statistically more likely to be harmed by someone they know than by a stranger. It's important to define clear safety rules for your children when it comes to strangers, but also explain signs to look out for with people they do know — and be sure to set boundaries for who your children can be around and when. Talk to them in a way that encourages caution and safety, without instilling undue fear.

ONE OF THE BEST DETERRENTS IS COMMUNICATION

KidPower notes the best way to protect your child's personal safety is knowing what is happening with them. They encourage parents and guardians to take time to ask their children questions that can open a door for important questions, such as: "Is there anything you've been wondering or worrying about that you hav-



en't told me?" and to listen to their answers with patience and respect.

EXPLAIN WHAT'S HAPPENING

Whether you're leaving your child in the care of someone for a few days or a

few minutes, explain to your child what's happening so they can be aware and know the different safety rules for different scenarios. The "rules" when under the supervision of a parent in the yard is almost certainly different than under the care of a

babysitter at a public park.

USE EXAMPLES, PARTICIPATION

The report notes that merely telling children about safety or showing them what to do is not enough.

"When we just talk to chil-

dren about danger, their raised awareness can actually raise their level of anxiety. Young people learn best by actively participating. Practicing children's personal safety skills increases their confidence and competence," the report notes.

Staying Safe Outdoors

Outdoor play is critical for a child's development, from developing hand-eye coordination to getting fresh air and exercise. There are a few things, however, that kids (and parents) need to remember while having fun in the sun.

PROTECT YOUR SKIN

Depending on your skin type, it can take less than half an hour to get a sunburn. Even a short play session outside can turn into a painful and dangerous sunburn without the proper precautions. The first thing to remember is to always wear sunscreen. Beyond that, be sure to take frequent breaks from the sun by going indoors or moving into the shade to rest. Kids Health notes the sun is at its strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., so be extremely cautious during those periods — or consider moving play time to before or after that window.

WHICH SUNSCREEN?

Kids Health recommends children and adults use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) rating of 30 or higher. You also should put on sunscreen 15-20 minutes before going out in the sun to allow time for it to dry. Be sure to put on sunscreen anywhere that will be exposed, focusing on your face, neck and ears. Depending on your skin type, you may need to adjust the SPF level up accordingly.

HYDRATE! HYDRATE! HYDRATE!

The hotter it is, the more you need to hydrate while spending time outdoors. Kids



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Health notes that when you're sweating, you lose water that your body needs to properly function. If you're playing a sport or running around in the sun, you lose even more

water, because you sweat that much more due to the increased activity.

"So drink up and don't wait until you're thirsty," Kids Health notes. "Drinking

before you feel thirsty helps keep the water level in your body from dropping too low (dehydration) when it's hot or you're sweating a lot with exercise. If you forget and

suddenly feel thirsty, start drinking then."

A water bottle with a fun design or a favorite character might help in getting a child to drink water more frequently.

Bicycles: Riding Safely

Bike riding is practically a rite of passage for kids, but it also can be extremely dangerous if proper safety measures aren't followed.

GET A HELMET THAT FITS

If you crash, your head is one of the most important parts of the body to protect. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends getting a helmet that fits properly, and be sure to wear it while riding.

ADJUST YOUR BICYCLE TO FIT

The NHTSA also recommends you adjust your bicycle to fit, specifically by standing over your bicycle. There should be 1-2 inches between you and the top tube (bar) if using a road bike and 3-4 inches on a mountain bicycle. The seat should be level front to back, and seat height should be adjusted to allow a slight bend at the knee when the leg is fully extended. The handlebar height should be at the same level with the seat.

MAKE SURE OTHERS CAN SEE YOU

Depending on where you're riding your bike, it stands to reason there could be other,



larger vehicles around, as well. The NHTSA recommends, whether you're riding at daytime, dawn, dusk, in foul weather, or at night, make sure you can be seen by others.

It might not make sense, but the report notes wearing white has not been shown to make you more visible.

Instead, always wear neon, fluorescent or other bright colors when riding day or night. It's also recommended to wear something that reflects light, such as reflective tape or markings.

WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING

It's a good rule of thumb of

watch where you're going, no matter what you're doing. The NHTSA recommends riders watch for and avoid road hazards. Watch for hazards such as potholes, broken glass, gravel, puddles, leaves and animals. Any of these hazards could cause a crash, so pay attention to your surroundings and know what's coming.

AVOID RIDING AT NIGHT

The NHTSA notes it is far more dangerous to ride at night than during the day because you are harder for others to see in the dark. If you do choose to ride at night, wear something that makes you more easily seen by others, such as reflectors on your bike and clothes.

Defend Against Cyberbullying

Bullying has been a recurring problem for kids, but now its made the transition online, and at times, has gotten a whole lot uglier. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has some recommendations for avoiding and preventing cyberbullying.

KNOW WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE UP TO

The government's Stop Bullying campaign recommends parents know the sites their kids visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going, what they're doing and who they're doing it with.

The campaign recommends parents tell their kids that, as a responsible parent, you may review their online communications if you think there is reason for concern. Installing parental control filtering software and monitoring programs some options for keeping tabs on your child's online behavior, but do not rely solely on these tools.

DO SOME STUDYING

Along with just talking to your kids and keeping up with their activities, parents also should do a bit of research to learn more about the social media services and websites children are frequenting. This can provide a better understanding of what your children are doing, while also better equipping you to spot warning signs earlier if a problem is beginning to arise. Also put in some effort into learning the lingo and emojis used on those services, so you can understand what your child is really saying.



ASK FOR PASSWORDS

Online freedom is understandably a big deal for kids, especially teens, but parents still need to work with them to keep a level of control and support. To that end, the Stop Bullying campaign recommends parents ask their children for their passwords —

with the stipulation they'll only be used in the event of an emergency.

JOIN YOUR CHILD'S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

To stay in the loop and see how your child is acting online, the campaign recommends parents ask to "friend"

or "follow" their kids on social media sites. It's the easiest way to stay plugged in and can serve as a reminder to your children to carefully consider their behavior while online.

REPORT CYBERBULLYING

The campaign recommends parents encourage their kids

to immediately report a situation if they or someone they know is being cyberbullied. Explain that you will not take away their computers or cell phones if they confide in you about a problem they are having. Instead, develop trust so you can work to address the problem together.

Avoid Child Identity Theft

It may seem like more of an adult problem, but identity theft can and does happen to children — and can create a ton of headaches. So, to avoid having your child's identity stolen, Parents magazine has a few tips.

KEEP SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS SECURE

When your child is born, along with getting a birth certificate, parents also are tasked with getting a Social Security card and number for their child. A stolen Social Security card can be used to open everything from a bank account to a cell phone to a bank loan, so, keeping it safe is critical. If it falls into the wrong hands, someone could potentially set up an account in your child's name.

Parents magazine recommends parents and guardians be very cautious to whom they release that private information, and don't provide it to organizations that don't actually need the information.

The fewer groups and people who know the number, the less likely it is to be stolen.

Another step that can be taken is to mail anything featuring a Social Security number from the post office, instead of leaving it in the mailbox where it could be stolen. The report notes a crafty thief could see the red mailbox flag as the perfect opportunity to steal information. If you want to take it a step further, you can require a signature for those letters via certified mail.



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PROTECT THEIR FIRST BANK ACCOUNT

It's not uncommon for parents to open a bank or savings account in the name of their child, to start everything from a future piggy bank to a college

fund. If the account details fall into the wrong hands, that data could cause major problems. Bank statements typically come via snail mail. A potential identity thief could get his hands on that number

and use it to open a loan or drain the money from the account.

Opt out of mailings for special offers and account statements, or have them switched to an adult's e-mail address. If

you do receive credit card or loan offers in the mail linked to the account, be sure to shred them immediately — don't just throw them in the trash, where they can be found.

Gun Safety

Guns are extremely dangerous when not secured and kept out of the hands of children, so parents and guardians who are gun owners need to take precautions — especially when they have children living in the home or visiting.

EXPLAIN THE DANGERS TO CHILDREN

Kids Health recommends you break your warning down to your kids' level, explaining that though they might see guns in TV shows, movies and video games, they are extremely dangerous in real life. One approach the report recommends:

“A real gun is never a toy, and life is not a video game. Real guns use bullets that hit actual targets. If that target is an animal or a person, the bullet can rip through skin, muscles, bones and organs, doing a lot of damage. A gunshot can permanently injure or even kill someone.

That's why you must never play with a real gun. Even if you think you're safe, anything can happen once you put your finger on the trigger. Most kids in gun accidents later say they didn't fire the gun wanting to hurt anyone, yet someone got badly hurt. So never show a gun to a friend and never, ever point a gun at anyone — including yourself — even as a joke.”

MAKE SURE THE WEAPON IS SECURE

If you choose to keep a gun in your home, Kids Health recommends it be kept locked where a child can absolutely not gain access to it. Kids Health notes experts

say that the best way to prevent gun-related injuries and deaths is to remove guns from homes. Of course, that isn't always practical. Weapons can be used for hunting and protection, and

some professions (such as police and security) typically require a weapon. Regardless, the report recommends the weapon be kept in a secure location to ensure a child is unable to use it.

EDUCATE YOUR CHILD

Though parents can control the atmosphere at home, they give up that level of control when their child leaves to visit with friends or family. It's of the utmost importance you talk to

your child about what to do if they see or find a gun. Tell them not to touch it under any circumstance, and to tell an adult immediately. It could make the difference between life and death.



Staying Safe in the Water

Swimming is a great family activity and an excellent way to encourage your child to exercise — but it also can be dangerous. The American Red Cross notes that approximately 61 percent of children can't perform basic water safety skills, which could prove dangerous.

The organization recommends five skills children should master to stay safe in the water.

Step or jump into the water over his head. Before being let loose in the water, you should teach your child the basics of swimming and learning how to float, in case he finds himself in deeper water than he'd anticipated. From a big wave at the beach to an errant jump at the pool, it can happen in an instant.

Return to the surface and float or tread water for one minute. This is a big one, as the one-minute timeline would give a potential rescuer a much better chance of reaching a child in the event of a problem. So, focus on teaching your child not to panic if she finds herself in that situation, and to tread water.

Turn around in a full circle and find an exit. Being able to swim is one thing, but knowing what to do next is equally important. The Red Cross notes that being able to turn in a full circle while staying afloat to find an escape route from the water also is critical. Work with your child to stay calm and scan the surroundings for the quickest way out of the water.

Swim 25 yards to the exit without stopping. More than half of children aren't able to swim 25 yards without stop-



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ping, and the report notes it's important for children to be able to swim that distance.

Exit from the water, and get out of a pool without the ladder. Getting to the side of the

pool is important, but it's equally important your child be able to get out once he

reaches it. Teach him to pull up and climb out, just in case he's not near a ladder.