

Preventable Injuries Claim the Lives of More Than
2,000 Children Each Summer

Safe Kids Coalition Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County
Offers tips to keep children injury-free during "trauma season."

Coldwater, MI- While summer is a memorable time for most children, less time in the classroom and more time going swimming, bike riding, or playing in the back yard can lead to a higher exposure to serious, yet preventable, injuries. There are some simple steps parents can take to ensure that children enjoy their favorite summertime activities while avoiding a visit to the emergency room.

This summer, children ages 14 and under will be rushed to emergency rooms nearly 3 million times for serious injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes, drowning, bike crashes, pedestrian incidents, falls and other hazards. "In the injury prevention community, summer is also known as 'trauma season' because of the dramatic increase in the number of children injured from May through August," said Mary Proctor, Safe Kids Coordinator for Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County. Sadly, by the end of the summer, more than 2,000 children will die because of injuries that could have been prevented."

Parents and caregivers should keep these tips in mind so safety stays a top priority this summer:

- Actively supervise your child when engaging in summertime activities, such as swimming and playing on the playgrounds and backyards.
- Use the appropriate safety gear for your child's activities, such as a helmet for wheeled sports and sporting activities, a car seat or booster seat as appropriate, and a life jacket for open water swimming and boating.
- Role model proper safety behavior. Children are more likely to follow safety rules when they see their parents doing so.
- If you have a pool or a spa, it should be surrounded on all four sides by a fence at least **four** feet high with self-closing, self-latching gates and it should be equipped with an anti-entrapment drain cover and safety vacuum release system. An inflatable pool needs to be surrounded by a fence, just like any other pool, and parents need to empty these pools when not in use.
- Make sure your home playground is safe. Keep 12 inches safe surfacing, such as mulch, shredded rubber or fine sand, extending at least six feet in all directions around the equipment. Remove hood and neck drawstrings from your child's clothing.
- Keep children away from the grill area while preheating and cooking, and while the grill is cooling.
- Remove potential poisons from your yard, including poisonous plants, pesticides and pool chemicals.
- Walk all the way around a parked vehicle to check for children before entering a car and starting the motor. Don't let children play in driveways, streets, parking lots or unfenced yards adjacent to busy streets.

- Apply sunscreen rated SPF 15 or higher to your child's exposed skin 15 to 30 minutes before going out, and reapply frequently.
- 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), if a child has a seizure, or if they become disoriented in hot weather.

Active supervision, proper protective gear, and other simple prevention steps will help your child avoid danger. For more information about summer safety, visit www.safekids.org.

Safe Kids Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Our Safe Kids Coalition is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County was founded in 2000 and is led by the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency.

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