

A Guide to Summer Safety

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services • Public Health • Injury & Violence Prevention Program

WATER SAFETY

Around Home

Nine out of ten children who drowned, were being supervised by an adult.¹ Children can drown in as little water as it takes to cover their mouth and nose. They lose consciousness in only 2 submerged minutes and can develop irreversible brain damage in only 4-6 minutes. Sixty-nine percent of toddler and infant drowning occurred when the child was not expected to be near the pool or spa, but elsewhere in the home. In addition 33% of infants and toddlers drown at a relative or friends pool, while parents are visiting.

Use layers of protection, such as:

- active supervision
- isolation barriers around pools and spas
- self-closing and self-latching gates that open outward away from the pool or spa
- keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook-a long pole with a hook on the end and a life preserver) and know how to use them
- keep a telephone in the pool area

Outside The Home

- always swim in a designated supervised area and obey rules and posted signs
- when on a boat or near the water, children should wear U.S. Coast Guard approved lifejackets at all times. Make sure the life jacket is the correct size and is worn properly (snugly) with all buckles fastened.
- plastic water wings, toys, rafts, and air mattresses are not life jackets

RIDING SAFETY

- California law requires that children under the age of 18 wear approved safety helmets when riding bicycles, scooters, skateboards and skates.



- DHS and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) strongly recommend protective gear such as elbow and knee pads, and wrist guards for those riding skateboards and in-line and roller skates.
- When riding scooters, the rider should also wear elbow and knee pads in addition to the helmet for protection.
- Never ride skateboards or scooters near traffic.
- When riding a bicycle always ride with traffic, use bicycle lanes when possible, and obey all traffic laws.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Child Safety Seats

- California Child Passenger Safety Law¹ requires children to be properly secured in a child seat or booster seat until they are at least 6 years old or weigh at least 60-pounds.
- Children under 16 years of age but at least 6 years old or 60 pounds should use a child restraint system (car seat, booster, harness, or other product certified to meet Federal Safety Standards), or in a properly fitted safety belt (lap belt touching the thighs and shoulder belt on child's shoulder, not under their arm or behind their back).
- Read and follow manufacturer's instructions. To check if the safety seat has been recalled, contact 888 327-4236.

Booster Seats

Between ages 4-8 children have outgrown the age and weight limit of their child safety seat **and** must be seated in the back of the vehicle in a booster seat **and** be restrained with a lap/shoulder belt. The booster seat will "boost" the child up, so the lap/shoulder belt fits them properly.

Never Leave Your Child Unattended in a Vehicle

Even with a window open, the temperature in a vehicle can skyrocket in just minutes and turn a vehicle into a suffocating trap for a young child. Every summer in Los Angeles County children die from heat stroke from being left unattended in a vehicle. **Never** leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even with a window open, and do not allow children to play in or around vehicles.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that nearly 200,000 playground-related injuries requiring emergency room visits occur each year. About 150,000 of those injuries occur on public playgrounds.

- Most playground-related injuries are associated with inadequate supervision. The National Program for Playground Safety recommends parents be more active in watching their children while on the playground.
- Parents should visually inspect the equipment for potential safety problems and make sure children do not play on any unsafe equipment.
- Make sure that metal slides are cool to prevent a child's hand and legs from being burned from the hot summer sun.

BABY-SITTING SAFETY

Many local police departments have safety tips for babysitters; DHS also has safety tips you can download from their website at www.lapublichealth.org or have mailed (call the Injury and Violence Prevention Program at 213-351-7888).

- **Never** leave a child unattended in the bathtub or sink for any reason.
- Always pre-plan and have items available that you need before you bathe the child (i.e. soap, towel, clothing, diaper, powder, etc. and place these items where you can easily reach them).
- **Never** leave to answer the phone, answer the door, etc. If you must leave, take the child with you and close the bathroom door.
- Bath Seats: some bath seats and rings adhere to the bottom of the bathtub with suction cups. **Never** leave the child unattended in these devices as suction cups often come loose and the child can tip over. If you choose to use these devices **always** be in arms reach of the child.
- An infant or toddler should never be left with an older sibling.
- Keep toilet seats down to prevent toddlers from falling in
- Keep bathroom doors closed at all times.
- If the home has a pool or spa, make sure it has a barrier fence and gates that are locked. Also make sure any doors or windows leading to the pool or spa remain closed and locked at all times. If one of the doors has a doggy door that leads to the pool or spa have the homeowners block this off to prevent a child from climbing through.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Children under the age of 15 are at risk for death and hospitalizations due to pedestrian injury, then decreases as children get older.

Children learn by observing behaviors of their parents and caregivers so they must model safe pedestrian behavior. This includes:

- crossing streets at corners
- obeying pedestrian signals
- using crosswalks when possible
- making eye contact with the driver prior to crossing to make sure the driver sees you
- looking left, right and left again before crossing the street
- never running into the street for any reason
- walking facing traffic on sidewalks or paths.
- walk as far to the left as possible when there are no sidewalks,
- always be aware that cars and delivery trucks can be backing from a driveway or alley when crossing the sidewalk.

Parents and caregivers should also set limits for their children as to when they are allowed to travel as a pedestrian.

- Children under the age of 10 should never cross streets alone because they do not have the skills and judgment on traffic behavior.
- When older children are walking at night or dusk have them carry a flashlight and wear reflective material.
- Parents and caregivers should know the safest path (most direct route with the fewest crossings and other safety measures) for older children to walk and plan these prior to the child leaving.
- Never let younger children play in driveways, unfenced yards, streets, or parking lots.

FUN IN THE SUN SAFETY

Sun Protection

Outdoors activities can expose children to skin damage from the sun, even on cloudy days, as well as heat stress.

- Babies under 6 months of age should avoid sun exposure and be dressed in light-weight long pants and long-sleeved shirts and brimmed hats to prevent sunburn, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- For older children, sunscreen with a SPF of at least 15 should be applied at least 30-minutes before going outside and reapply as directed, especially after swimming or sweating. A hat, sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet rays, and cotton clothing to cover as much skin as possible should be worn.
- Avoid the peak intensity of sun exposure between the hours of 10:00am and 4:00pm.

Dehydration Prevention

Children are more susceptible to dehydration and heat illness than adults. Remember:

- children absorb more heat because they have a greater surface-area to body-mass ratio than adults (whereas the smaller the child the faster the heat is absorbed).
- children produce more metabolic heat during physical activity,³ are unable to dissipate as much heat through sweat,⁴ and like adults, often do not have the physiological drive to drink enough fluids to replace the loss of sweat during prolonged exercise.⁵
- children should drink at least 12 ounces of fluid 30 minutes before the activity begins
- during activity, children under 90 pounds, should drink 5 ounces every 20 minutes; and children over 90 pounds drink 9 ounces every 20 minutes
- after activity children should drink another 5 ounces every 20 minutes during the first hour after the activity to make up for fluid loss.

1. A National SAFE KIDS study

2. Bar-Or, O. Temperature Regulation during exercise in children and adolescents. In: Gisolfi C. Lamb DR. eds. Perspectives in Exercise and Sports Medicine, II Youth, Exercise and Sport. Indianapolis, IN: Benchmark Press: 1989, 335-367

3. Bar-Or, O. Temperature Regulation during exercise in children and adolescents. In: Gisolfi C. Lamb DR. eds. Perspectives in Exercise and Sports Medicine, II Youth, Exercise and Sport. Indianapolis, IN: Benchmark Press: 1989, 335-367

4. Bar-Or, O. Temperature Regulation during exercise in children and adolescents. In: Gisolfi C. Lamb DR. eds. Perspectives in Exercise and Sports Medicine, II Youth, Exercise and Sport. Indianapolis, IN: Benchmark Press: 1989, 335-367

5. Rivers-Brown A., et al. Drink composition, voluntary drinking and fluid balance and hydration in boys exercising in the heat. J Appl Physiol, 80: 1112-1117, 1996