



## Outdoor Play Safety

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**Rain or shine, it is always a good time of year to revisit outdoor health and safety issues.**

**Clothing safety:** Drawstrings can strangle a child if they get caught on playground equipment. Before your child plays outside, remove drawstrings.

**Little kids on big kid equipment:** "Lift me up! Pick me up!" Complying with this request isn't always the safest policy. If a child is big enough to use playground equipment on their own, then they are old enough. But if you have to lift a child for them to use equipment, they are probably not developmentally ready. You can say, "When your body is big enough to reach the monkey bars on your own, you will be ready to use them. I know it is hard to wait, but my job is to keep you safe."

**Use sunscreen, hats and sunglasses.** Sunscreens don't ensure you won't get skin cancer. The American Cancer Society advises people to **use protective clothing and avoid excessive midday sun exposure** in the first place. Sunscreen should be used when sun exposure can't be avoided. If your child has to be in the sun, use a sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB rays. Although we tend to think of sun protection just in the summer, it should be a **year-round practice**. Sun's rays can get through clouds and can reach at least one foot below the surface of the water.

**Babies younger than 6 months old** should not be in direct sunlight and shouldn't use sunscreen. Dress infants in lightweight clothing, wide-brimmed hats and baby sunglasses.

**Supervision:** Take regular head counts when children play outdoors; every few minutes do a quick count and make sure you know where all your children are located.

**Broken equipment:** If you notice broken playground equipment, report it to your school or Parks and Recreation department. Do not let the children play on broken equipment.

**Trampolines:** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that families do NOT use home trampolines. A recent study (June 2007) by the Academic Emergency Medicine journal found that trampoline injuries among children have more than doubled in the past decade. 95% of these injuries involved home trampolines.

Link to study: <http://www.aemj.org/content/vol14/issue6>

More information about outdoor safety can be found on multiple web pages on the American Academy of Pediatrics website. Start with:

<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/summertips.htm>