

Summer Safety for Children

Spring is upon us and summer is right around the corner, which means children spend more time outdoors – trips to the beach, outside sporting leagues and playing in the yard. Research shows that children's eyes can be damaged from sun exposure, just like their skin. This damage may put them at increased risk of developing debilitating eye diseases such as cataracts or macular degeneration as adults. It is important to make sure your children are wearing 100 percent UV blocking sunglasses. Whenever you are outside with children, remember to put a hat and/or sunglasses on them just as you would yourself. Children should be taught at a young age to wear sunglasses and hats to protect their eyes from the sun, so they will grow up with healthy sun protection habits. Keep children out of the sun between peak times -10 a.m. and 2 p.m.-- when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.

Here are some summertime safety suggestions for children.

Make sure your kids wear sunglasses - Sunglasses for children may be purchased inexpensively. Check for 100 percent UV protection when buying sunglasses: Make sure your sunglasses block 100 percent of UV rays and UV-B rays. Don't focus on the color or darkness of sunglass lenses; Select sunglasses that block UV rays. The ability to block UV light is not dependent on the price tag. Look for glasses with a polycarbonate lens; children under six may need a pair with straps to keep them in place.

Wear protective eyewear when playing sports. Tens of thousands of sports and recreation-related eye injuries occur each year. The good news is that 90 percent of serious eye injuries are preventable through use of protective eyewear. While helmets are required for many organized sports like baseball, protective eyewear unfortunately is not. For all age groups, sports-related eye injuries occur most frequently in baseball, basketball and racquet sports. Sports eye protection should meet the specific requirements of that sport; these requirements are usually established and certified by the sport's governing body and/or the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

If sand gets in your child's eyes, no rubbing. If a child gets sand blown or thrown into his eyes, an adult should immediately take him to a sink with running water. You should restrain the child from rubbing his eyes, as this can irritate the thin corneal tissue and make symptoms worse. Encourage the child to blink; also crying will help as the tears remove eye irritants. If the child's eye still bothers him, it is important to seek medical attention from an Eye M.D.

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