



Seasonal Safety Tips



Year-round:

Car seats and seat belts

- For a comprehensive review, go to <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx> or visit the link from the South Lake Pediatrics website.
- In brief, infants under one-year-old should be in rear-facing car seats, children up to eight-years-old and under 4'9" should be in appropriate car seats or booster seats, and children under age 13 years should always be seated in the back of a car (due to risk of injury from front air bags). Seat belts should always be worn by adults and kids in cars.

Stay active

- It's important to have active play or exercise throughout the year, an average of 1 hour per day. It can be harder to get this active time during the winter months as it takes more planning. We encourage you to find winter sports or indoor/outdoor activities that both children and parents enjoy doing during the cold months.

Sun protection

- Protection from sunburns and excessive sun tans *now* gives us protection from future skin cancers, and keeps skin looking healthier and with fewer wrinkles as we age.
- How best to dress: Wear light weight clothing to block direct sunlight. The tighter the weave of the clothes, the greater it's UV protection. The new lines of UV-blocking "water shirts" work well. Sunglasses with specifically marked UVA/UVB protection will block the eyes from 99+ % of damaging rays. Hats with at least a 3-inch brim or bill provide additional facial sun protection.
- Choosing a sunscreen: The label should indicate "broad spectrum" which means UVA and UVB protection. The SPF (sun protection factor) indicates the degree of UVB protection; SPF of 15 or higher is recommended. UVA protection is indicated with a star system of one star (lowest protection) to four stars (highest protection). For sensitive areas of the body such as the nose, cheeks, tops of ears and shoulders, a thick sunscreen with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide provides the most protection. PABA-free, waterproof and hypoallergenic sunscreens are preferred.
- Applying sunscreen: Apply it about 30 minutes before going outside. Use enough to cover all the sun exposed skin areas. Remember that sunburns can happen even on cloudy days, and that UV rays can bounce back from water, sand or snow. Plan to reapply about every two hours, as it wears off from sweating, swimming, or just from soaking into the skin. The sun's rays are strongest between 10 am and 4 pm.
- **For infants under 6 months:** The best approach is to avoid direct sun exposure; keep them in shaded areas when outside, and dress them in light clothing that covers their bodies. When sun exposure is unavoidable, it IS recommended to apply a small amount of sunscreen only to the sun-exposed skin areas.
- Remember to apply sunscreens to exposed skin for outdoor fall and winter sports. An SPF lip balm is a great idea for winter sports.

Guns and firearms

- If you choose to keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a gun safe or other locked area. Ammunition should be locked separately.

International travel

- We are happy to provide a travel consultation to give you destination-specific advice and perhaps vaccines. You should ideally set this up at least four weeks before your departure date.

Radon gas

- Radon is an invisible and odorless gas that is emitted from the ground, and is present in high levels in many parts of Minnesota. Radon exposure is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. It's a good idea to check your home for radon levels; an inexpensive test kit can be purchased from most hardware stores, and then mailed in for analysis.

Fires and burns

- It's wise to prepare a fire escape plan from your home. This includes having a fire-escape ladder for use from upper floors of homes, and having a designated meeting place.
- Appliances such as ovens, stoves and outdoor grills, hot irons, and hot liquids or cooked foods can all pose burn risks. Young children need to be monitored and kept away from these hot appliances and foods.

Food preparation safety

- Cook foods containing meats or eggs thoroughly to prevent bacterial contamination. Thoroughly clean food-prep surfaces after preparing raw meats or uncooked eggs. Foods that require refrigeration should not be kept at room temperature for more than two hours.
- When there are recalls/alerts on certain foods, an up-to-date advisory can be found at the www.cdc.gov website.

CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation)

- It's a great idea for parents and caregivers to attend CPR classes (about every 2 years) to learn how to manage life-threatening crises. You can find a listing of local classes online at www.redcross.org/classes.
- When caring for young children, controlling the play environment to prevent choking is essential. This means keeping small toys, plastic bags, etc. out of their reach. The foods that most frequently can cause choking in young children include grapes, hot dogs, nuts, popcorn, hard candies and uncooked carrots; so they should be avoided.

Poison control

- The poison control phone number (**1-800-222-1222**) should be kept in all homes near a central phone, and even on your cell phone. If you ever have a question about a child swallowing (or even potentially swallowing) something hazardous, you should immediately call this number. There are poison control centers nation-wide, so if you call while travelling outside of Minnesota you may be connected with a different regional poison control center.

Additional useful websites

- www.southlakepediatrics.com - We have compiled a lot of useful information and resources on our website.
- www.healthychildren.org - This is the parent information section of the American Academy of Pediatrics website.
- www.vaccine.chop.edu and www.vaccineinformation.org - These two sites provide honest, accurate and current information on vaccines.
- www.clinics4kids.org - This website is maintained by the Children's Health Network, a Twin Cities network of pediatric primary care and subspecialty practices. You can find a wide range of general pediatric information there.

Spring-Summer:

Insect bite/sting prevention

- Don't attract them: Avoid scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays. Remember that clothing with bright colors or floral prints will attract more insects. To steer clear of biting insects you can avoid stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods or gardens where flowers are in bloom.
- Insect repellents: Avoid insecticide/sunscreen combined products. DEET-containing products are the most effective, and range from less than 10% to over 30% DEET. Products with up to 10% DEET last about 2 hours, those with 30% DEET last 5-6 hours. Apply it sparingly on exposed skin, using the lowest concentration of DEET necessary for the length of your outing. Avoid applying it to the areas around the eyes and mouth, or over cuts, wounds or irritated skin. Do not use DEET on the hands of young children.
- To remove a visible stinger from the skin, gently scrape it with a credit card or your fingernail.
- Minnesota is an area high in Lyme Disease-carrying deer ticks. It's a good idea to do a tick check after a day of playing or hiking in wooded areas. Ticks that are on for less than 2-3 days should not be able to transmit disease.

Stay hydrated

- Kids can suffer from heat stress and dehydration if they don't drink enough, especially on very hot and humid days! Send them with water and be sure they're taking frequent water breaks.
- Ideally, clothing should be light-colored and lightweight and limited to one layer of absorbent material to facilitate evaporation of sweat. Sweat-saturated or wet clothes should be replaced by dry ones.

Wheeled sport safety: bicycles, skateboards, scooters, rollerblades and Heelys shoes

- Do not push your child to ride a 2-wheeled bike until he/she is ready, usually at about age 5 or 6. Consider the child's coordination and desire to learn to ride. Stick with pedal brakes until your child is older and more experienced.

- Take your child with you when you shop for a bike, so that he or she can try it out. The value of a properly fitting bike far outweighs the value of surprising your child with a new bike.
- **Your child should wear a helmet for all wheeled sports**, no matter how short the trip or how close to home! Many accidents happen in driveways, on sidewalks, and on bike paths, not just on streets. Other protective gear such as wrist guards for appropriate wheeled sports can really prevent injuries. **Adults should always wear helmets too**, for their own safety as well as to set a good example!
- Children should never ride skateboards or scooters in or near traffic.
- We're seeing increasing injuries and broken bones due to Heelys shoes, especially when the shoes are new and kids are just learning how to use them.

Pool safety

- Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment.
- Install a fence at least four-feet high around all four sides of the pool. This is the most effective means of drowning prevention! Make sure pool gates self-close and self-latch at a height children can't reach.
- Whenever infants and toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."
- Swim programs for children under four years old should not be seen as a way to decrease the risk of drowning.

Boats and lakes

- Your children should wear life jackets at all times when on boats or near bodies of water.
- Make sure the life jacket is the right size for your child. The jacket should not be loose. It should always be worn as instructed with straps belted. Blow up water wings, toys or rafts should never replace life jackets or life preservers.

Trampolines

- The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages parents from purchasing or allowing their children to use a home trampoline. There are approximately 250,000 US trampoline-related injuries per year, some serious or even fatal.
- Trampoline safety is improved if you have a safety net, always maintain adult supervision, limit to one jumper at a time especially when doing tricks or flips, and forbid jumping off a trampoline onto another surface or into a pool.

Fireworks

- Fireworks can result in severe burns, scars and disfigurement that can last a lifetime.
- Sparklers can reach temperatures above 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, and can burn users or bystanders, even though many people mistakenly believe them to be "safe fireworks."
- The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages families to attend professional fireworks displays instead of using fireworks at home.

Lawn mower safety

- Use a mower with a control that stops it from moving forward if the handle is released.
- Children younger than 16 years old should not be allowed to operate or to ride on lawn mowers. We suggest not allowing young children in the vicinity of power equipment when in use.
- Make sure that sturdy shoes (not sandals or sneakers) are worn while mowing. Hearing and eye protection are a good idea too.
- Prevent injuries from flying objects, such as stones or toys, by picking up objects from the lawn before mowing begins.
- Whenever reversing in a ride-on mower ALWAYS look behind to ensure no one is in the mower's path.
- Always turn off the mower and wait for the blades to stop completely before removing the grass catcher, unclogging the discharge chute, or crossing gravel paths or roads.

Leaving older children home alone/babysitters

- Spend some time explaining your expectations for any time that your children are unsupervised.
- Create a first aid kit and teach children how to use it. Establish a list of emergency phone contacts and keep it by the phone.
- Store alcohol and prescription medication in a location that is completely inaccessible to children.
- Consider establishing rules about friends coming over to visit.
- When selecting babysitters, consider your sitter's age and maturity level along with their decision-making abilities; some would suggest a minimum age of 13 years for girls and 14 years for boys.

Fall-Winter:

Cold weather gear

- Remember that here in Minnesota, we routinely live, work and play in temperatures lower than we'd tolerate for the meats we keep in our freezers! So we must dress appropriately to prevent frost bite. This means wearing jackets, gloves/mittens and hats, and to limit time spent outside on below zero days. Also remember that metal conducts heat and cold, so be careful when handling metal objects outdoors.
- Signs of frostbite may include skin going from pink to white or blue; skin may feel cold, stiff or rubbery; skin may be tingling, numb or painful. Areas most vulnerable to frostbite are the nose, cheeks, ears fingers and toes. If any of this occurs, immediately go inside to a warm (not hot) area, out of the wind. Warm water can slowly warm up the skin, but don't rub. An evaluation by your clinician is advised if skin does not warm up within 30 minutes, remains blue/white and hard, or if blisters develop.

Ice/snow safety

- Frozen lakes/ponds: Thin ice is a serious drowning risk! According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, many factors contribute to ice strength. They've posted some reasonable guidelines on ice safety at their website: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice/index.html>. In brief, and for new, clear ice only: 2 inches or less - STAY OFF, 4 in. - ice fishing or other activities on foot, 5 in. - snowmobile or ATV, 8 to 12 in. - car or small pickup, 12 to 15 in. or more - medium truck.
- Snow caves: If kids want to build snow caves or forts, supervision is important as caves do collapse at times, or may be in the paths of cars or snow plows if built close to the street.

Carbon monoxide

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause illness and death. It is produced whenever any fuel such as natural gas, propane, gasoline, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. It's essential in our climate to have a carbon monoxide alarm, at least one on each floor of your home, and in hearing range of all sleeping areas.
- Furnaces should be checked and serviced annually. All fuel-burning interior appliances should be kept in good condition and have proper ventilation. Cars should not be kept idling in garages (whether open or closed) that are attached to a house.

Fireplaces and heaters

- Fireplaces, wood stoves, kerosene heaters, portable space heaters and electric blankets can all cause skin burns if not used carefully and appropriately. Children should be closely supervised around any of these.
- Fireplaces: Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that the flue is open. Use care with "fire salts," (which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires) as they contain heavy metals that can be dangerous if eaten. Do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace. Fireplace doors or screens may become very hot and may cause burns if touched; consider this when having a lit fire around young children who lack good judgment.

Winter driving

- Drive slower when roads are snowy or icy. Keep at least a half tank of gas in your car. Be particularly aware of black ice on bridges, and highway entrance and exit ramps. Keep a windshield scraper in your car. Keep a safety kit in your car including a blanket, flares, a flashlight and jumper cables. If stranded, call 911, stay in your vehicle, run the heat intermittently and keep a window cracked to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- During winter storms: avoid unnecessary driving. You can call MN DOT at 511 or online at www.511mn.org to check road conditions. Drive behind the snow plows and at a safe distance.

Holiday-specific tips

- If your family purchases a Christmas tree: For artificial trees, choose ones that are fire-resistant. Be sure to keep all trees away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters. Never use lit candles on or near a tree. In decorating trees, choose fire-resistant materials, and always keep small parts that can be choking hazards away from the reach of small children, as well as sharp decorations. Check all tree lights each year, even if just purchased, to ensure no broken bulbs, exposed wires or broken sockets.
- Presents: Check the age recommendations on toys; toys with small parts that can be choking hazards are not advised for children under three years old. Pull toys with strings longer than 12 inches can be a strangulation hazard for infants and young children. Check for toy recalls; a good website for this is the US Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.cpsc.gov.