

6 Years



6 YEARS

Safety for Your Child

Did you know that injuries are the greatest threat to the life and health of your child? Injuries are the leading cause of death of school-aged children. **Yet you can prevent most major injuries!**

At age 6, your child will become more independent. He or she will be able to do more things that are dangerous. Your child will try to prove that he or she is grown up. But children still aren't good at judging sound, distance, or the speed of a moving car at this age. Your child can learn a few simple things to do for protection, but **you must still be in charge of his or her safety.**

Fire Safety

Make an escape plan in case of fire in your home. Your fire department can tell you how. Teach your child what to do when the smoke alarm rings. Practice what you and your child would do if you had a fire.

Do not smoke in your home. Many home fires are caused by a lit cigarette that has not been put out completely.

Install smoke alarms on every level in your house, especially in furnace and sleeping areas, and test the alarm every month. It is best to use smoke alarms that use long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries once a year.

Firearm Hazards

Children in homes where guns are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or family members than of being injured by an intruder. It is best to keep all guns out of the home. **Handguns are especially dangerous.** If you choose to keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place, with the ammunition locked separately. Ask if the homes where your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored.

Bike Safety

Protect your child from bad head injuries or even death. **Make sure your child wears a properly fitted, approved helmet every time she rides a bike.** Never let your child ride in the street. Your child is too young to ride in the street safely!

Street Safety

Never let your child play near the street. Your child may dart out into traffic without thinking. The park or playground is the best place to play. Begin to teach your child safe street habits. **Teach your child to stop at the curb,** then look to the left, to the right, and back to the left again. Teach your child never to cross the street without a grown-up.



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And Remember Car Safety

Your child must now use a **booster seat** in the car. Always check to be sure that he or she is correctly restrained in the booster seat before you start the car. Your child should use a booster seat until the lap belt can be worn low and flat on the hips and the shoulder belt can be worn across the shoulder rather than the face or neck (usually at about 4 feet 9 inches tall and between 8 and 12 years old). The safest place for all children, even through school age, is in the back seat of the car. Set a good example.

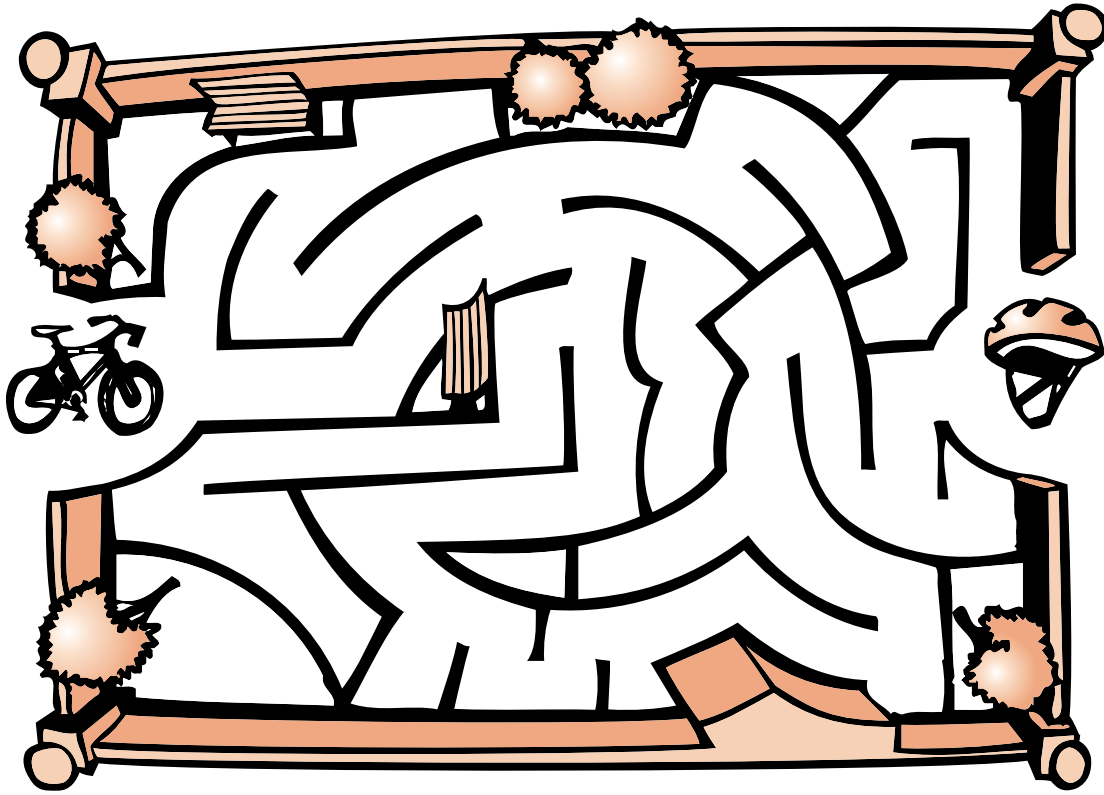
Make sure you and other adults buckle up, too!



SAFETY IN A KID'S WORLD

Dear Parent: Your child is old enough to learn how to prevent injuries. The game below is designed to help your child think about safety. Read the messages with your child and talk about them together. Then take this safety sheet home and post it where everyone can see it.

It takes time to form a safety habit. Remind each other what it says. Make safety a big part of your lives.



Bike Safety

Always wear a 

when you ride your



Get the Helmet Habit!

Directions: Find your way through this maze. Connect the helmet with the bicycle.

From Your Doctor

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Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Middle Childhood (6-8 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Middle childhood brings many changes in a child's life. By this time, children can dress themselves, catch a ball more easily using only their hands, and tie their shoes. Having independence from family becomes more important now. Events such as starting school bring children this age into regular contact with the larger world. Friendships become more and more important. Physical, social, and mental skills develop quickly at this time. This is a critical time for children to develop confidence in all areas of life, such as through friends, schoolwork, and sports.

Here is some information on how children develop during middle childhood:

Emotional/Social Changes

Children in this age group might:

- Show more independence from parents and family.
- Start to think about the future.
- Understand more about his or her place in the world.
- Pay more attention to friendships and teamwork.
- Want to be liked and accepted by friends.

Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Show rapid development of mental skills.
- Learn better ways to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings.
- Have less focus on one's self and more concern for others.

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

- Show affection for your child. Recognize her accomplishments.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—ask him to help with household tasks, such as setting the table.
- Talk with your child about school, friends, and things she looks forward to in the future.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage him to help people in need.
- Help your child set her own achievable goals—she'll learn to take pride in herself and rely less on approval or reward from others.
- Help your child learn patience by letting others go first or by finishing a task before going out to play. Encourage him to think about possible consequences before acting.
- Make clear rules and stick to them, such as how long your child can watch TV or when she has to go to bed. Be clear about what behavior is okay and what is not okay.
- Do fun things together as a family, such as playing games, reading, and going to events in your community.



- Get involved with your child's school. Meet the teachers and staff and get to understand their learning goals and how you and the school can work together to help your child do well.
- Continue reading to your child. As your child learns to read, take turns reading to each other.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, rather than punishment to make him feel bad about himself. Follow up any discussion about what *not* to do with a discussion of what *to* do instead.
- Praise your child for good behavior. It's best to focus praise more on what your child does ("you worked hard to figure this out") than on traits she can't change ("you are smart").
- Support your child in taking on new challenges. Encourage her to solve problems, such as a disagreement with another child, on her own.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a team sports, or to take advantage of volunteer opportunities.

Child Safety First

More physical ability and more independence can put children at risk for injuries from falls and other accidents. Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of death from unintentional injury among children this age.

- Protect your child properly in the car. For detailed information, see the American Academy of Pediatrics' Car Safety Seats: A Guide for Families.
- Teach your child to watch out for traffic and how to be safe when walking to school, riding a bike, and playing outside.
- Make sure your child understands water safety, and always supervise her when she's swimming or playing near water.
- Supervise your child when he's engaged in risky activities, such as climbing.
- Talk with your child about how to ask for help when she needs it.
- Keep potentially harmful household products, tools, equipment, and firearms out of your child's reach.

Healthy Bodies

- Parents can help make schools healthier. Work with your child's school to limit access to foods and drinks with added sugar, solid fat, and salt that can be purchased outside the school lunch program.
- Make sure your child has 1 hour or more of physical activity each day.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or afterschool care.
- Practice healthy eating habits and physical activity early. Encourage active play, and be a role model by eating healthy at family mealtimes and having an active lifestyle.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>
 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>



BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PARENT

5 AND 6 YEAR VISITS

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to your family.

✓ HOW YOUR FAMILY IS DOING

- Spend time with your child. Hug and praise him.
- Help your child do things for himself.
- Help your child deal with conflict.
- If you are worried about your living or food situation, talk with us. Community agencies and programs such as SNAP can also provide information and assistance.
- Don't smoke or use e-cigarettes. Keep your home and car smoke-free. Tobacco-free spaces keep children healthy.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs. If you're worried about a family member's use, let us know, or reach out to local or online resources that can help.

✓ FAMILY RULES AND ROUTINES

- Family routines create a sense of safety and security for your child.
- Teach your child what is right and what is wrong.
- Give your child chores to do and expect them to be done.
- Use discipline to teach, not to punish.
- Help your child deal with anger. Be a role model.
- Teach your child to walk away when she is angry and do something else to calm down, such as playing or reading.

✓ STAYING HEALTHY

- Help your child brush his teeth twice a day
 - After breakfast
 - Before bed
- Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.
- Help your child floss his teeth once a day.
- Your child should visit the dentist at least twice a year.
- Help your child be a healthy eater by
 - Providing healthy foods, such as vegetables, fruits, lean protein, and whole grains
 - Eating together as a family
 - Being a role model in what you eat
- Buy fat-free milk and low-fat dairy foods. Encourage 2 to 3 servings each day.
- Limit candy, soft drinks, juice, and sugary foods.
- Make sure your child is active for 1 hour or more daily.
- Don't put a TV in your child's bedroom.
- Consider making a family media plan. It helps you make rules for media use and balance screen time with other activities, including exercise.

✓ READY FOR SCHOOL

- Talk to your child about school.
- Read books with your child about starting school.
- Take your child to see the school and meet the teacher.
- Help your child get ready to learn. Feed her a healthy breakfast and give her regular bedtimes so she gets at least 10 to 11 hours of sleep.
- Make sure your child goes to a safe place after school.
- If your child has disabilities or special health care needs, be active in the Individualized Education Program process.

Helpful Resources: Family Media Use Plan: www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan

Smoking Quit Line: 800-784-8669 | Information About Car Safety Seats: www.safercar.gov/parents | Toll-free Auto Safety Hotline: 888-327-4236

5 AND 6 YEAR VISITS—PARENT

✓ SAFETY

- Your child should always ride in the back seat (until at least 13 years of age) and use a forward-facing car safety seat or belt-positioning booster seat.
- Teach your child how to safely cross the street and ride the school bus. Children are not ready to cross the street alone until 10 years or older.
- Provide a properly fitting helmet and safety gear for riding scooters, biking, skating, in-line skating, skiing, snowboarding, and horseback riding.
- Make sure your child learns to swim. Never let your child swim alone.
- Use a hat, sun protection clothing, and sunscreen with SPF of 15 or higher on his exposed skin. Limit time outside when the sun is strongest (11:00 am–3:00 pm).
- Teach your child about how to be safe with other adults.
 - No adult should ask a child to keep secrets from parents.
 - No adult should ask to see a child's private parts.
 - No adult should ask a child for help with the adult's own private parts.
- Have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on every floor. Test them every month and change the batteries every year. Make a family escape plan in case of fire in your home.
- If it is necessary to keep a gun in your home, store it unloaded and locked with the ammunition locked separately from the gun.
- Ask if there are guns in homes where your child plays. If so, make sure they are stored safely.

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 4th Edition*

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

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The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Original handout included as part of the *Bright Futures Tool and Resource Kit*, 2nd Edition.

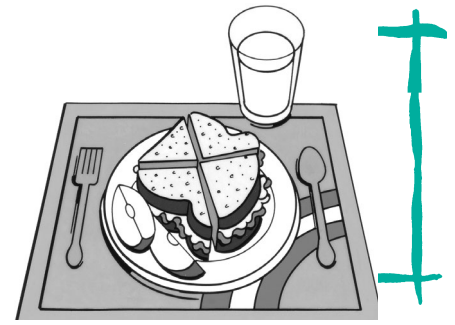
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What's to Eat?

Healthy Foods For Hungry Children



The Food Guide Pyramid—A Menu for Good Health

Ask anyone who cares for children—feeding kids can be challenging! The Food Guide Pyramid is a tool for helping you plan meals and snacks for your family. The advice is given for one day*. This brochure gives meal suggestions that are tasty, convenient and nutritious. From breakfast through dinner, these ideas will please even the fussiest eater. For specific food and nutrition advice, talk to your child's pediatrician or a registered dietitian.

*The amount of food and number of servings children need daily from each food group depends on their age and how active they are.

Active Play is Important, Too!

Physical activity, along with proper nutrition, promotes lifelong health. Active play is the best exercise for kids! Parents can join their children and have fun while being active, too. Some fun activities for parents and kids to do together include playing on swings, riding tricycles or bicycles, jumping rope, flying a kite, making a snowman, swimming or dancing.

Off to a Good Start...The Breakfast Bonus

Breakfast provides energy to carry a child through an active morning. Children who skip breakfast may not concentrate well at school or may lack energy to play. Not everyone enjoys traditional breakfast foods, such as cereal and toast. These breakfast ideas are a little different:

- Breakfast shake: combine skim or 1% milk*, fruit and ice in a blender.
- Frozen banana: dip a banana in yogurt, then roll it in crushed cereal. Freeze.
- Peanut butter spread on crackers, a tortilla, apple slices or jicama slices.
- Leftover spaghetti, chicken or pizza: serve hot or cold!

* Skim and 1% milk are recommended for children over two years old. Children under two years of age should only drink whole milk.

Cereal Choices

Cereal with milk is the number-one breakfast favorite. Check the Nutrition Facts label—found on most packaged foods—for the amount of iron, other nutrients and fiber. Look at the % Daily Values to find how much.

If your child prefers a sweet taste, you might jazz up unsweetened cereal with sliced peaches or bananas, strawberries, or blueberries.

Lunches Worth Munchin'

Children who help make their own lunches are more likely to eat them. Include these brown bag perks to make lunches fun!

- Use cookie cutters to cut sandwiches in fun, interesting shapes.
- Decorate lunch bags with colorful stickers.
- Put a new twist on a sandwich favorite. Top peanut butter with raisins, bananas or apple slices.
- For color and crunch, use a variety of veggies as "sandwich toppers": cucumber slices, sprouts, grated carrots or zucchini.

Brown Bag Food Safety

Remember the golden rule for food safety:

Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold.

When there's no refrigerator to store a bag lunch, keep food safe by:

- Tucking an ice- or freezer-pack into the lunch bag. Or use an insulated container to keep hot foods hot.
- Adding a box of frozen fruit juice.
- Freezing the sandwich bread and filling—or other freezable foods—the night before.

You may also help prevent food-borne illness by:

- Encouraging your child to wash his or her hands thoroughly before meals.

Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children

A Daily Guide for 2- to 6-Year-Olds



Did You Know That...

Most regular deli meats, such as salami and bologna, are very high in fat. Try reduced-fat deli meats. Turkey breast, ham and roast beef are usually lower-fat choices. Check the Nutrition Facts label on packaged meats to learn the fat content.

Pretzels, baked tortilla chips and baked potato chips are virtually fat-free and make a good alternative for potato chips and other high-fat snacks.

The Meal Dilemma... Dealing with Picky Eaters

Even the most nutritious meal won't do any good if a child refuses to eat it. Some youngsters are naturally finicky eaters. Others eat only certain foods—or refuse food—as a way to assert themselves. If your child refuses one food from a group, try offering a substitute from the same food group of the Food Guide Pyramid. Try these ideas to make your family meals happy ones:

If Your Child Refuses... Instead Try...

Green vegetables	Deep-yellow or orange vegetables
Milk	Chocolate milk, cheese, yogurt
Beef	Chicken, turkey, fish, pork

- Boost the nutritional value of prepared dishes with extra ingredients. Perhaps add nonfat dry milk to cream soups, milkshakes and puddings. Or mix grated zucchini and carrots into quick breads, muffins, meatloaf, lasagna and soups.
- Serve a food your child enjoys along with a food that he or she has refused to eat in the past.
- Try serving a food again if it was refused before. It may take many tries before a child likes it.
- Let children help with food preparation. It can make eating a food more fun.
- Add eye appeal. Cut foods into interesting shapes. Or create a smiling face on top of a casserole with cheese, vegetables or fruit strips.
- Set a good example by eating well yourself. Whenever possible, eat meals as a family.

How Much Food Is Enough?

Some parents worry because young children seem to eat small amounts of food, especially when compared with adult portions. Don't worry about how little a child eats. A child who is growing well is getting enough to eat.

Hungry And In a Hurry? Food for Fast Times

When it comes to food, families want convenience. It's no surprise that fast-food restaurants are so popular. However, some fast foods supply a lot of fat and calories. These tips help you get the most from foods that are fast:

- Most fast foods can fit within a healthful eating plan. Children and adults can afford to eat these foods every once in a while if other food choices are sensible. Try these ways to enjoy them:
 - Share:* split an order of fries with other family members.
 - Choose food-group foods:* in combination meals, substitute fruit juice or skim or 1% milk* for soft drinks.
 - Balance high-fat choices with low-fat choices:* order a small hamburger and the salad bar for your child. Kids like the fresh fruit, carrot sticks and broccoli florets.

- Most fast-food spots offer lower-fat choices: salad bar (low-fat dressing), plain baked potatoes (topped with salad bar veggies), chili, skim or 1% milk*, low-fat frozen yogurt, English muffins, fruit juice and grilled (non-fried) chicken sandwiches.
- Supermarkets offer a variety of nutritious foods that are fast. Ready-made deli sandwiches (made with reduced-fat deli meats), fresh fruits and the salad bar are some "fast foods" from the grocery store.

* Children under two years of age should *only* drink whole milk.

Microwave Magic—Safely!

A microwave oven can help you cook in a healthful way. Vegetables cooked in a microwave oven stay nutrient-rich. For one reason, nutrients don't dissolve in any cooking water; short cooking time is another factor. Meat, fish and poultry dishes can be cooked or reheated with little or no added fat.

Microwaving also can help you cook faster and easier. But it can pose potential hazards—especially when children cook with the microwave oven. BURNS are the most common microwave injury. Children can be burned by:

- Removing dishes from the microwave oven—*make sure they use a pot holder.*
- Spilling hot foods—*keep the oven out of a young child's reach.*
- Opening microwave popcorn packages and other containers—*show older children how to open the container so steam escapes away from their hands and face.*
- Eating food that is cooked unevenly or has "hot spots"—*show older children how to stir food well before tasting it, or let food "rest" so that heat distributes evenly.*

Here's a common sense rule for microwave ovens: *If children are too young to read or follow written directions, they are too young to use a microwave oven without supervision.*

This brochure was developed as part of the **HEALTHY START...Food to Grow On** program, an information and education campaign that promotes healthful food choices and eating habits for healthy children ages two years and over. The **HEALTHY START** program was produced as a cooperative effort by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), The American Dietetic Association (ADA), and the Food Marketing Institute (FMI).

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Food pyramid courtesy of USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion.

From your doctor

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 57,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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Bicycle Safety: Myths and Facts

Learning to ride a bike is a developmental milestone in the life of a child. The bicycle, a child's first vehicle, is a source of pride and a symbol of independence and freedom. Yet all too often children are seriously injured, or even killed, when they fail to follow basic bicycle safety rules. The following is a list of common bicycle safety myths, coupled with the correct information you need to teach your children about safe bike riding. These facts will help you and your children make every bike ride safe.

Myth: My child doesn't need to wear a helmet on short rides around the neighborhood.

Fact: Your child needs to wear a helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short or how close to home. Many accidents happen in driveways, on sidewalks, and on bike paths, not just on streets. In fact, most bike crashes happen near home. A helmet protects your child from serious injury, and should always be worn. And remember, wearing a helmet at all times helps children develop the helmet habit.

Myth: A football helmet will work just as well as a bicycle helmet.

Fact: Only a bicycle helmet is made specifically to protect the head from any fall that may occur while biking. Other helmets or hard hats are made to protect the head from other types of injury. Never allow your child to wear another type of helmet when riding a bike, unless it is a multisport helmet certified for bicycle use by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Myth: I need to buy a bicycle for my child to grow into.

Fact: Oversized bikes are especially dangerous. Your child does not have the skills and coordination needed to handle a bigger bike and may lose control. Your child should be able to sit on the seat, with hands on the handlebars, and place the balls of both feet on the ground. Your child's first bike should also be equipped with footbrakes because your child's hand muscles and coordination are not mature enough to control hand brakes.

Myth: It's safer for my child to ride facing traffic.

Fact: Your child should always ride on the right, with traffic. Riding against traffic confuses or surprises drivers. Almost one fourth of bicycle-car collisions result from bicyclists riding against traffic.

Myth: Children shouldn't use hand signals, because signaling may cause them to lose control of their bikes.

Fact: Hand signals are an important part of the "Rules of the Road" and should be taught to all children before they begin to ride in the street. They are an important communication link between cyclists and motorists. Any child who does not have the skills necessary to use hand signals without falling or swerving shouldn't be riding in the street. Many crashes involving older children occur when they fail to signal motorists as to their intended actions.

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Myth: Bike reflectors and a reflective vest will make it safe for my child to ride at night.

Fact: It's never safe for your child to ride a bike at night. Night riding requires special skills and special equipment. Few youngsters are equipped with either. Never allow your child to ride at dusk or after dark.

Myth: I don't need to teach my child all of this bicycle safety stuff. I was never injured as a child. Biking is just meant to be fun.

Fact: Riding a bike is fun — if it's done safely. Unfortunately, most people don't realize hundreds of thousands of children are seriously injured each year in bicycle falls. Worse still, hundreds of children die from them each year. Although you may have been lucky enough to survive childhood without a serious bicycle-related injury, you shouldn't count on luck to protect your child.

Teach your child these basic safety rules

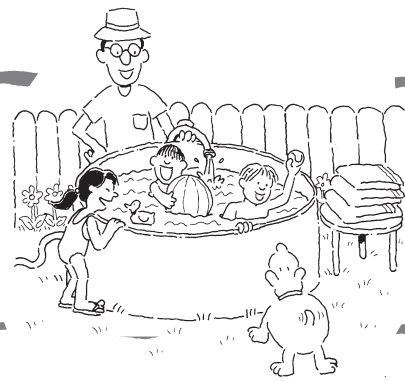
1. Wear a helmet.
2. Ride on the right side, with traffic.
3. Use appropriate hand signals.
4. Respect traffic signals.

Basic safety measures like these can keep bicycle riding enjoyable and safe for your child.

From Your Doctor

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A Parent's Guide to Water Safety



Drowning is one of the top causes of injury and death in children. Children can drown in pools, rivers, ponds, lakes, or oceans. They can even drown in a few inches of water in bathtubs, toilets, and large buckets. Read more about how to help keep your children safe around water.

Water safety at home

Parents need to keep a close eye on infants and young children, especially as they learn to crawl. *To keep your child safe, make sure you*

- **Always stay within arm's reach of your child when she is in the bathtub.** Many bathtub drownings happen (even in a few inches of water) when a parent leaves a small child alone or with another young child. Your child is always more important than answering the telephone or taking care of household chores.
- **Empty all buckets and other large containers.** The weight of a bucket filled with liquid can be heavy, and a child may not be able to tip it over and get out if she falls in.
- **Keep bathroom doors closed.** Install doorknob covers or a hook-and-eye latch or other lock that is out of the reach of your small child.
- **Keep toilets closed.** Always close the toilet lid, and consider using a toilet lid latch.
- **Watch your child when using a bath seat or ring.** Bath seats and rings are meant to be bathing aids. They are not substitutes for adult supervision and will not keep your child from drowning.

Water safety at the pool

An adult should actively watch children at all times while they are in a pool. Use "touch supervision." This means an adult is never more than an arm's length away, or is able to touch the child, at all times. Remember, supervision by an older child, and even the presence of a pool lifeguard, isn't a safe substitute for adult supervision.

Pool rules

If you have a pool, insist that the following rules are followed:

- Keep toys away from the pool when the pool is not in use.
- Empty blow-up pools after each use.
- No tricycles or other riding toys at poolside.
- No electrical appliances near the pool.
- No diving in a pool that is not deep enough.
- No running on the pool deck.

Pool fences

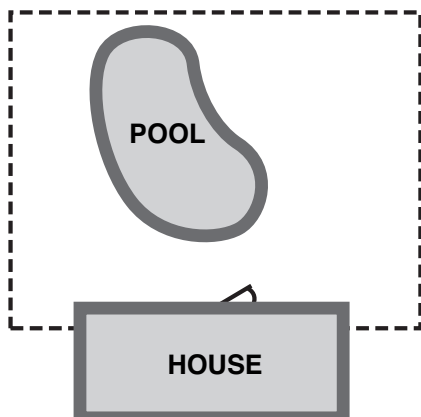
To prevent a small child from entering the pool area on his own, there should be a fence that completely surrounds the pool or spa. Combined with the watchful eyes of an adult, a fence is the best way to protect your child *and* other children who may visit or live nearby.

A pool fence should be climb-resistant and should not have anything alongside it (such as lawn furniture) that can be used to climb it.

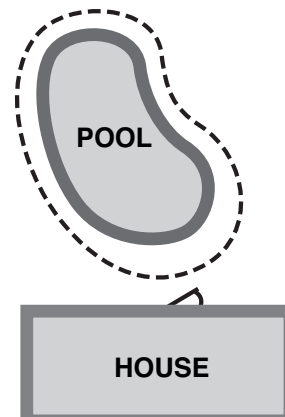
Pool fences should also

- Completely surround the pool, separating it from the house and the rest of the yard.
- Be at least 4 feet high and have no footholds or handholds that could help a child climb it.
- Have no more than 4 inches between vertical slats. Chain-link fences are very easy to climb and are not recommended as pool fences. If they must be used, the diamond shape should not be bigger than 1¾ inches.
- Have a gate that is well maintained and is self-closing and self-latching. It should only open away from the pool. The latches should be higher than a child can reach.
- Keep children away from steps or ladders (for above-ground pools). If not, the steps or ladders should be locked or removed to prevent access by children.

WRONG!



RIGHT!



In an emergency

The following are ways to be ready for an emergency:

- **Learn CPR.** Anyone caring for or watching children should know CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). CPR can save a life and help reduce injury after a near drowning. The American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, and your local hospital or fire department offer CPR training.
- **Always have a phone near the pool.** Clearly post your local emergency phone number (usually 911).
- **Post safety and CPR instructions at poolside.**
- **Make sure all rescue equipment is nearby.** This includes a shepherd's hook, safety ring, and rope.

The following are things to do in an emergency:

- **Yell for help.** Carefully lift the child out of the water.
- **Start CPR right away.** Have someone call the emergency medical service (911).
- **Call your pediatrician.** Even if the child seems normal when revived, call your pediatrician right away.

Additional protection products, when used with a 4-sided fence, are also important; however, these are not substitutes for adequate fencing. These may include the following:

- Automatic pool covers (motorized covers operated by a switch). Pool covers should cover the entire pool so that a child can't slip under them. Make sure there is no standing water on top of the pool cover. Be aware that floating solar covers are *not* safety covers.
- Door alarms
- Doors to the house that are self-closing/self-latching
- Window guards
- Pool alarms

Swimming lessons

Children are generally not developmentally ready for formal swimming lessons until after their fourth birthday. Also, swimming lessons for infants and toddlers do not necessarily make them safer in or around the water and are not a recommended means of drowning prevention at these ages.

If you want to put your small child in a swimming program, choose one that doesn't require him to put his head under water (swallowing too much water can make your child sick). Also, find a program that lets you swim with your child. Once your child is ready (generally after his fourth birthday) he should be taught how to swim. However, remember that teaching your child to swim does not mean he is safe in the water. Even a child who knows how to swim can drown a few feet from safety. Also remember that even a child who knows how to swim needs to be watched at all times. No one, adult or child, should ever swim alone.

Older children and teens are also at risk from drowning, even if they know how to swim. They often drown while swimming in unsupervised places such as water-filled quarries, rivers, or ponds. Although many teens can swim well, they often encounter risky situations that they might not recognize, such as rough currents, surf, and sharp rocks. Alcohol is also a factor in many drownings among teens.

Diving

Serious spinal cord injuries, permanent brain damage, and death can occur to swimmers who dive into shallow water or spring upward on the diving board and hit it on the way down.

Keep safe by following these simple common-sense diving rules.

- Check how deep the water is. Enter the water feet first, especially when going in for the first time.
- Never dive into above-ground pools; they are usually not deep enough.
- Never dive into the shallow end of a pool.
- Never dive through inner tubes or other pool toys.
- Learn how to dive properly by taking classes.

Water safety in other bodies of water

Swimming in a pool is different from swimming in other bodies of water. In addition to rules for pool safety, parents and children should know the rules for swimming in oceans, lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. *These include*

- Never swim without adult supervision.
- Never dive into water unless an adult who knows the depth of the water says it's OK.
- Never try water sports such as skiing, scuba diving, or snorkeling without instructions from a qualified teacher.
- Always use an approved personal flotation device (life jacket) when boating, riding on a personal watercraft, fishing, waterskiing, or playing in a river or stream.
- Never swim around anchored boats, in motor boat lanes, or where people are water skiing.
- Never swim during electrical storms.
- If you swim or drift far from shore, stay calm and tread water, or float on your back until help arrives.
- Water wings and other blow-up swimming aids should not be used in place of life vests.
- Other water hazards found near many homes include canals, ditches, post holes, wells, fish ponds, and fountains. Watch your child closely if your child is playing near any of these areas.

Life jackets and life preservers

If your family enjoys spending time on the water, make sure everyone wears an approved personal flotation device or life jacket. Some people think life jackets are hot, bulky, and ugly. However, today's models look and feel better and protect better. Many states require the use of life jackets and life preservers. They must be present on all boats traveling in water supervised by

Don't drink and swim

Swimmers are at serious risk of drowning when they drink alcohol or use other drugs while swimming, diving, and playing water sports. These activities require clear thinking, coordination, and the ability to judge distance, depth, speed, and direction. Alcohol impairs all of these skills. People who are supervising other swimmers should not be using alcohol or drugs.

the US Coast Guard. Remember, without wearing a life jacket, your child is not protected.

Keep the following tips in mind:

- A life jacket should not be used in place of adult supervision.
- Choose a life jacket that fits your child's weight and age. It should be approved by the US Coast Guard and tested by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Check the label to be sure. The label should also say whether the jacket is made for an adult or a child.
- Teach your child how to put on her own life jacket and make sure it is worn the right way.
- Blow-up water wings, toys, rafts, and air mattresses should never be used as life jackets or life preservers.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

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