

The Medical Minute: Outdoor injury prevention starts in your backyard

May 12 2010, By Lynley Lapp and Shannon Kearns

Five major injury hazards to children -- motor vehicles, drowning, burns, falls and poison -- can be found in the backyard during the summer. Riding mowers, inflatable pools, home playground equipment, and even natural vegetation and sunlight require a few simple precautions. Safety guidelines that apply to public recreation activities and equipment also apply to those activities in your own backyard.

The Pediatric [Injury Prevention](#) Program at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital recommends these precautions to keep activities fun and safe at home:

- Install four-sided isolation fencing with self-closing and self-latching gates around pools and spas. Wading pools should be emptied after each use and stored upside down. Always actively supervise children around water.
- Be sure home playground equipment is age-appropriate and surrounded 6 feet in all directions by at least 12 inches of loose fill materials such as shredded rubber or wood chips. Grass and asphalt are not safe surfaces for equipment.
- Treat a riding mower like any other motor vehicle. Keep ignition keys out of reach. Do not give rides on a riding mower, as a child may become injured if he/she approaches for a ride when an adult is mowing. Look before backing up. Children should be kept in the house whenever a mower or other power equipment is being used.

- Remove potential poisons from your yard, including poisonous plants, pesticides and pool chemicals. Teach children not to handle or eat any part of a plant unless you know it is safe.
- Keep children away from the grill area at all times while the grill is in use.
- Teach children not to disturb or feed any wild animals, no matter how harmless the animals may seem.
- Look all around vehicles in the driveway before backing up to make sure that no children or adults are behind the vehicle.
- Apply sunscreen rated SPF 15 or higher to your child's exposed skin 15 to 30 minutes before going out, and reapply frequently. Remember that it is possible to get sunburned in cloudy conditions.
- Make sure your child stays hydrated during warm conditions.

The Pediatric Injury Prevention Program and Safe Kids Dauphin County, led by Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, are dedicated to preventing the number and severity of childhood injuries through education and advocacy. The program is funded in part through the [Children's](#) Miracle Network and Safe Kids USA. Programs are founded on the theory that most injuries are preventable and teach how to be safe at home, at play, and on the way.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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