

The Medical Minute: Stay safe around the house this summer

June 11 2012, By Susan Rzucidlo, R.N.

Each of five major child injury hazards -- motor vehicles, drowning, burns, falls and poison -- can be found in the back yard or around your home during the summer. Riding mowers, inflatable pools, home playground equipment and even natural vegetation and sunlight require a few simple precautions for a fun and safe summer break.

All of the safety guidelines you apply to sports, [playgrounds](#) and swimming apply to those activities in your own back yard. For instance, an inflatable pool needs to be surrounded by a fence, just like any other pool. Another example: Home playground needs to be anchored on an appropriate surface just like equipment on a public playground.

Here are some other simple precautions you can take to ensure safe activities in the back yard:

-- 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 six 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.

-- Remove potential poisons from your yard, including poisonous plants, pesticides and pool chemicals. Teach kids not to handle or eat any part of a plant unless you know it is safe.

- Keep children away from the grill area while preheating and cooking and while the grill is cooling.
- 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. (It is possible to get a sunburn in cloudy conditions.)
- Make sure your child stays hydrated.

More information: For more information on keeping you and your family safe at home, play and on the way, call the pediatric trauma program injury prevention line at 717-531-SAFE (7233).

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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