

common sense

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

By Mark Bello

It has certainly been a long winter; you probably thought it would never end. Spring has sprung, and now summertime is around the corner. Summer, of course, means outdoor fun. Swimming and playing in the hot summer sun are the favorite activities of the season. But, like any activity, it is important for parents to think "safety first" when permitting their children to engage in summer activities.

With safety in mind, I want to focus on three particular issues:

1. SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY
2. HYGIENE AND WATER ILLNESSES
3. SUN PROTECTION

SWIMMING & WATER SAFETY

Swimming, in backyard or community pools and in inland lakes and in the ocean, is a popular summer activity. Parents should absolutely permit their children to have fun in the water, but they should also be certain that everyone does so responsibly and safely.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that approximately 260 children under the age of five drown in swimming pools and spas; another 3,000 are treated in emergency rooms, some with permanent brain damage from prolonged submersion. Drowning is the fourth leading cause of death to children under five, and in warm weather states like California and Florida, it is the leading cause of death to children under five. Thus, it is important to practice safety around the water. With this in mind, here are some simple, but necessary, safety tips around water:

- ← Never leave a child unsupervised near the water, lake, ocean or backyard pool.
- ← If you leave your child with a babysitter at a backyard pool or at the beach, you must properly instruct a sitter about all potential hazards to children in and around water. You must make it clear that constant supervision is mandatory. I don't know how many times I have heard in my personal injury and lawsuit funding practice: "I only took my eyes off him for a second." You and those who you put in charge of your child's safety must exercise constant vigilance.
- ← Backyard pools should be completely fenced in and gates should be functioning, self-closing and self-latching. Have your pool maintenance person inspect the fence and the gate mechanism and repair it, if necessary. Latches should not be reachable by small children. All doors and windows leading to the pool should be kept secure so that small children cannot access the pool without adult supervision.

These barriers and locks are important, but are no substitute for responsible supervision.

- ← The use of a flotation device does not mean that a child does not need supervision. Neither do swimming lessons. If you are at the beach, I recommend a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket. Still, regardless of what steps you take to increase safety, you must carefully watch your children in the water. Let me repeat that. Regardless of lessons, flotation devices, or even life jackets, you must watch your children in the water.
- ← If a pool still has a cover in place or partially in place, do not allow your kids to swim. A child can become entangled and trapped in the cover. Unless the cover is completely removed and stored, do not use the pool.
- ← Keep toys away from the water. A young child may accidentally fall in the water while trying to retrieve a toy. Again, supervise your children.
- ← If you have an above ground pool, remove the access ladder or steps unless you are there to supervise your children going in and coming out of the pool. If the pool is not in use, remove them altogether and store them where kids cannot access them.
- ← Learn CPR, especially if you own a pool or frequent the beach often. Keep rescue equipment nearby.
- ← In these days of mobile phone accessibility, this is the time and the place to have one. I constantly write about the dangers of driving and using these devices, but this is where they can save lives. Have a mobile or portable telephone with you at the pool or the beach for two important reasons: {1.} You will never have to leave a child unattended to answer the phone, and {2.} You will have a phone handy (with emergency numbers nearby) in case of an emergency.

HYGIENE & WATER ILLNESSES

Over the past decade, there has been a sharp increase in swimming related illnesses. Thus, it is important for consumers to be aware of these water-related illnesses and how they can avoid them.

- In a backyard or community pool setting, the first line of defense against these illnesses is to keep germs from getting into your pool. Here are some simple, sensible tips:
- № 1. Don't allow your child to swim if he/she has diarrhea (I am, perhaps incorrectly, presuming that adults know better). Diarrhea can spread germs into water and make other swimmers sick.
 - № 2. Do not swallow pool water. Better yet, swim with your mouth closed and do not let water get into your



skin type	used to sun	light intensity	recommended SPF	time spent in the sun
I Very Sensitive	no	low	40-50+	2-3 hrs.
	no	high	50+	2-3 hrs.
	yes	low	30-40	3-4 hrs.
II Sensitive	yes	high	40-50+	2-3 hrs.
	no	low	30	3-4 hrs.
	no	high	50+	2-3 hrs.
III Less Sensitive	yes	low	20-30	3-4 hrs.
	yes	high	30	3-4 hrs.
	no	low	20-30	3-4 hrs.
IV Not Sensitive	no	high	30-40	2-3 hrs.
	yes	low	20-30	3-4 hrs.
	no	high	20-30	3-4 hrs.
	yes	low	8	3-4 hrs.
	yes	high	15-12	3-4 hrs.
	no	high	15-20	2-3 hrs.
	no	low	8-12	3-4 hrs.
	yes	high	15-20	2-3 hrs.

mouth, whether you choose to swallow it or not.

№ 3. Take a shower before swimming; always wash your hands after using the toilets or changing diapers. If there are germs on your body and you enter the water, those germs will end up in the water and will infect other swimmers. Make sure your small children shower or bathe with soap and water. Wash your children, especially their bottoms, with soap and water. There are invisible germs, back there, which will end up in the pool if not completely cleaned. Good hygiene is vital to disease prevention.

№ 4. If you have or are responsible for young children, take them to the bathroom often. If they are in diapers, check or change their diapers as often as you can. Do not wait for them to ask; you may be too late. Change diapers in bathrooms, not poolside. Surface germs can easily enter the water and spread disease.

Swallowing, or coming into contact with contaminated water from lakes, rivers, oceans, swimming pools, or spas can spread water illnesses. These illnesses range from diarrhea to respiratory, skin, eye, ear and wound infections; they can have a variety of symptoms. Water is shared with everyone else in it; if swimmers have diarrhea, an accidental discharge can contaminate the water and cause illness to other swimmers. Therefore, swimming when ill with diarrhea can easily contaminate multiple-use pools and other swimming areas.

Things like sewage spills can contaminate the ocean, as well as lakes and rivers. Animal waste and even rainfall can cause contaminated water runoff. Certain germs can even survive

for long periods in salt water. Thus, swallowing water, even in small quantities, from these sources may cause illness and the spread of illness to other swimmers.

In pools, chlorine can kill germs that cause illness, but this often takes awhile. Chlorine, in properly disinfected pools, will kill the majority of germs that cause water illness and will do so in a hour or less. Some germs, however, are more resistant, and survive for long periods of time, even in a correctly disinfected pool. Thus, you must take additional steps to prevent illness from spreading in backyard pools. People with compromised immune systems, children and pregnant women are most at risk and can suffer from severe illnesses from pool germs. People with a compromised immune system should consult their health care provider before participating in behaviors that place them at risk for illness.

SUN PROTECTION

Most people have had some experience with sunburn; suffice it to say that it can be quite painful. Kids need to be supervised and protected by their parents. Fortunately, most parents realize that even short-term exposure to the rays of the sun can cause severe sunburn and that sunblock protection is an important tool to use to avoid your child getting sunburned. When using a sunblock product, parents can often make mistakes that will result in the child getting sunburned. Avoiding these common mistakes will help you protect your child from harmful exposure to the sun.

№ 1. Do not assume that because it isn't hot enough or sunny enough, your child will not get sunburned. Apply sunblock, even if it is springtime or early summer. Use sunblock even if it is cloudy or partly cloudy. Use sunblock late in the day; with daylight savings time, parents will often underestimate how much daylight is left. In conditions like this, a child can still get sunburned.

№ 2. Follow the recommendations that the manufacturer places on a bottle of sunblock. Most people use less than they should. In fact, statistics show that the average person applies less than half of the recommended amount on their kids. Err on the side of more rather than less; lay it on thick and apply it to all parts of your child's body. Then, apply a little more. Sun block should have an SPF of 15 or higher and should be applied to all children over 6 months old. It is assumed that you will not be exposing a newborn, less than 6 months old to the harmful rays of the sun.

№ 3. Make sure that you apply sunblock to all exposed areas. Kids don't like having sunblock applied. They shift, they squirm, they cry, they scream. Don't give up or give in! Make sure you apply sunblock to all exposed areas and if the child refuses, don't let him/her outside until he/she acquiesces.

№ 4. Reapply sunblock periodically throughout the day. This is important, especially if the child is playing in water or is sweating. Use waterproof sunblock products, but do not assume that waterproofing means that reapplication is not necessary.

№ 5. Apply sunblock at least thirty minutes before your child goes outside. Sunblock takes awhile to become effective. Thus, if you wait to apply it after your child is already outside, he/she will go approximately thirty minutes without protection. Obviously, this is enough time for a child to get sunburned.

№ 6. Scope out the area your child is playing in and make sure it provides some shade. One good way to avoid sunburn is to find shaded areas for sun avoidance; even a little shade can make a difference.

№ 7. Have your child wear a hat, sunglasses, loose fitting and full-length clothing, if possible.

Obviously, children can have fun in the sun, in pools, spas, lakes, oceans and on the beach. It is your job to make sure they do so safely. By following some or all of these common sense suggestions, you and your child will, hopefully, enjoy an injury free, illness free, and sunburn free summer.

— Mark Bello is an attorney with Lawsuit Financial Corporation in Southfield, Michigan.



← From your computer, enter the article ID in the search box at thesafetyreport.com. Article ID: **1416**



← From your smart-phone, scan the tag using TagReader. For more information visit gettag.mobi.



Hot Cars & Kids, A Deadly Combination

By Janette Fennel & Sonja Butler

it happens once every ten days, on average – more frequently in the warmer months. A parent unintentionally causes the death of their own child by leaving him or her in the back of the car where the child succumbs to Heat-related Vehicular Death (HRVD). Why is this unthinkable tragedy happening with such frequency? There are several factors, but paramount is the fact that our brains are not keeping up with the demands of our busy lives.

The stories are similar and usually involve a loving, busy parent hustling off to work; but with a change in routine or even a minor distraction such as a cell phone call, or even a detour, people's lives can be changed forever. Think it couldn't happen to you? It's happened to a dentist, scientist, professor, paralegal, assistant principal and even a clergyman. All were educated, caring parents.

On average, thirty-seven children die in cars each year from heat-related deaths. This phenomenon has increased ten-fold since car seats were moved to the backseat. This does not mean it is safe to place children in the front seat, but it does mean that, out of sight, has sometimes meant "out of mind" – with tragic results. From 1998 - 2008, there have been more than 445 heat-related vehicular deaths for infants and children. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports, according to new research, this is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle deaths.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IN HEAT-RELATED DEATH

A child's body temperature rises 3-5 times faster than an adult's, making them more vulnerable to temperature changes. And even with the windows partially down, the temperature inside a parked car can reach 125 degrees in just minutes. In a process similar to that of a green house, vehicle interiors heat up rapidly, with the majority of the temperature rise occurring within the first 15 to 30 minutes. Leaving the windows opened slightly does not significantly slow the heating process or decrease the maximum temperature attained.

