



Surviving Summer Scorchers Can't take the heat?

Many people can't and end up in the hospital.

See next page for helpful tips to keep you safe in the heat.

health matters

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Chest pain, choking, bleeding, fainting, seizures. If an emergency occurs, how would you react?

Do you know the first steps of first aid?

"People are often hesitant to get involved in an emergency situation," says George Rodriguez, MD, Chair of the Emergency Department at El Centro Regional Medical Center. "It's not so much they don't want to help. They're worried they won't know what to do."

After all, emergencies can happen anywhere -- at a game, on a city street, at the grocery store, at home. What should you do?

THE BASICS

Call 911. Better safe than be sorry, says Rodriguez. "It's better that 911 get too many calls than too few," he says. "We routinely hear from paramedics summoned to a residence, for what neighbors thought was an emergency, to find out everyone's fine. There are never hard feelings about that. Paramedics expect that as part of the job. We'd much rather show up and find the person in good health at home than be called too late and things have spiraled out of control."

Stay calm. We've all heard stories about the Good Samaritan who gets hit by a car while



Emergencies can happen anywhere, at anytime. Would you know what to do?

trying to help someone else. "Creating another accident or another victim complicates things much more -- almost more than not getting involved. If you can't help safely, you shouldn't help," says Rodriguez. "It's important that you stay calm, make sure you're not putting yourself or anyone else in jeopardy, then attempt to help."

Start CPR. "Even people who have never taken a CPR course can be directed by a dispatcher to do CPR," says Rodriguez. "Many 911 dispatchers are trained to teach CPR over the phone. You can do chest compressions without even doing mouth-to-mouth. ... It's better than doing nothing."

Summer Fun For Kids

School's out, and your kids want to have some fun in the sun. How can you keep them happy and busy -- and maybe help them learn something -- all the way through August?

School's out, the long summer days are upon us, and your kids are restless.

Here are tips on what to keep in mind when you're planning summer activities, as well as some easy ideas for little tykes, preschoolers, and school kids that will keep them entertained all the way through August.

Let Summer Begin

When the thermometer starts to creep upward, the first thing you should consider when planning playtime is safety.

"I think with all age groups, parents should consider safety first," says Jeannie West, Director of the ECRMC Child Development Center.

With safety in mind, ask yourself, what activities are appropriate for your child's age? What safety equipment should you have on hand, such as a lifejacket if you have a pool, or training wheels and a helmet if your child wants to learn to ride a bike? Will you be home with the child, or working? If you're working, is an adult present?

"Kids should never be home alone, so make sure they're under adult supervision if you will be working," says West.

Second, what are your goals for your kids during the summer?

"Beyond simply keeping them busy, you want to keep their development in mind and realize how much learning goes on in play," says LuzEvla Tristan, MD, Chair of the ECRMC Pediatrics Department.

Learning doesn't stop the moment the school bell rings for the last time in June. Kids should keep on learning all summer long.

"Kids also need to work on social-emotional skills, which is ongoing for all age groups," says Tristan. "Make sure the activities your kids are involved in include kids their own age as well as kids other ages."

And last, remember that there is only so much time in the day -- don't overbook yourself and your kids so that summer vacation doesn't include a moment's rest.

"Eliminate stress," says Tristan. "A big huge calendar on your fridge that can help you keep track of everyone's schedule is a gold mine and really helps avoid overbooking. And make sure there are fun active things going on and also some laidback activities. It's OK to have nothing to do, to spend some time in the sandbox."

Toddlers

Toddlers, ages 1-2, require constant supervision. Whether you are home with your child or another adult is supervising, these activities will help your kids have fun in the sun.

Bins of fun: "Get some plastic bins and fill them with fun things, and rotate which bin your child gets every day," says West. "Use paper towel tubes and toilet paper tubes in one bin, which are great for toddlers to use as kazoo and drums. Put play dough in another bin and let them play with that for a while. And old paint brushes with just water are great -- toddlers can paint anything and watch the water change its color, and there's no pick up for you after."

Book time: "Reading is such a great activity for all ages," says Tristan. "For toddlers, have book time where you sit down and read for a half hour or so. Point to the pictures and tell your child what it is, and after reading it a few times, it's amazing how fast they'll pick it up and start saying it with you."

Read books to your toddler that have pictures of things you'll find outside in the summer -- butterflies, flowers, birds, bees,

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5 Common Emergencies

Imagine these common situations. Here's what to do:

EMERGENCY: Dizziness, Fainting. You're sitting at a game, maybe in the airport. A guy says he doesn't feel well.

"If he tells you -- a perfect stranger -- that he feels weak, ill, or dizzy, you should be dialing 911," says Rodriguez. "He needs medical attention." There are many medical causes for these symptoms, like a heart condition, diabetes, low blood sugar, pregnancy, heart attack, or it could be heat-related.

While you wait for paramedics to arrive:

Check alertness: Ask, "Are you OK?" advises Richie Navarro, RN, TNCC, ATLS, ACLS. "If they respond, ask 'Do you know where you are?' Ask things to determine level of orientation. If they become unresponsive, check for pulse, check to see if they're breathing. If you're by yourself, you have to find someone to help you."

If the patient is alert: Make the patient comfortable: "If this person has been out in the heat, move them to a shady spot where they can lie flat. If they're sweating, pour water over their skin," Navarro continues. Elderly people or very young children are more prone to heat-related conditions. "If they're awake, give them fluids to drink," he says.

Check breathing: Listen for breathing through the nose, watch the chest for rise and fall. Take a pulse, either at the wrist or neck. If they are breathing and have a pulse, you should stay with them to offer support. Again, 911 can help you figure out how to take someone's pulse.

Start CPR: If the patient isn't breathing and does not have a pulse, start CPR.

EMERGENCY: Chest Pain.

If someone grabs their chest and says "my chest hurts," assume it's a heart attack. "Chest pain is a heart attack until proven otherwise," Navarro. "That's how we look at it in the ER world. Chest Pain can be serious and as you get older it becomes more likely to be heart related, especially if you are a Diabetic or have High Blood Pressure."

Plan of action: Dial 911. Then check airway, breathing, circulation (ABC). Are they breathing? Do they have a pulse? If not, start CPR.

"The sad thing is, people get scared if they don't know CPR, they don't want to do the wrong thing," says Navarro. "The most important thing -- is to position their head with the chin up, get their tongue out of the way (so the airway is open), then start doing chest compressions."

To enroll in a CPR course contact the ECRMC Education Department at (760) 339-7377.

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Surviving Summer Scorchers

Can't take the heat? Many people can't and end up in the hospital. Hot enough for ya? It's an oven in here. Phew!



No one can resist commenting on the heat when the mercury rises above 100 degrees. It affects us profoundly -- in body and mind. In the worst cases, high heat and humidity can be deadly, too. During an average summer 175 people die of heat-related illness in the U.S.

During a summer heat wave, emergency rooms fill up with people suffering from heat sickness. Many walk in complaining of cramps and exhaustion, and some are rushed in with heat stroke. "Heat stroke is the one we're most concerned about," says Richard Obler, MD, Trauma Medical Director, and an Emergency Physician at El Centro Regional Medical Center.

Heat stroke victims, he says, are often near death. "They're treated the same as heart attacks or strokes or trauma patients."

The cause of heat stroke is simple: being too hot for too long. If sweating isn't enough to cool you down, your body temperature rises rapidly, up to 106 degrees in as little as ten or 15 minutes. That's hot enough to literally cook your brain. You pass out, and if you're not treated immediately, you will suffer brain damage or die.

When heat stroke victims are wheeled into the ER, Obler says, doctors try to cool them by stripping off all their clothes, blowing air over them with fans (it also helps that ERs are air conditioned), and bathing them with lukewarm water. You would think it would be best to douse them with ice-cold water, but water that's too cold causes shivering, which actually warms the body more.

In the most extreme cases, doctors will put the victim on a respirator and give a drug

to paralyze the body so they can bring the temperature down quickly.

Elderly at Risk

The elderly are most vulnerable to heat stroke, for various reasons. Imagine a widow living on her Social Security stipend in a neighborhood that was perfectly nice when she moved there in 1946, but has since become seedy. Her doors and windows are shut and locked for fear of burglars, and she doesn't run her air conditioner in order to keep her electric bills low.

On a hot, humid day, she's already in trouble: These conditions are enough to bring on heat stroke. When the air is humid and stagnant, sweat cools the body less efficiently because it can't evaporate. What's more, older people sweat less than younger people, and some medications such as diuretics and sedatives make it more difficult for the body to cool itself.

But let's say this widow takes blood pressure medication, which blunts her thirst, so she doesn't drink enough water. Then, to make matters worse, she has a beer after her morning coffee and chain-smokes. All these things dehydrate her. So she sweats even less, her body temperature soars, and by the time the Meals-on-Wheels man comes to bring her dinner, she's dead.

Obler says a healthy young person, treated in time, has about a 90% chance of surviving severe heat stroke. Nevertheless, a young person who is very drunk or has gotten high on a day when the temperature is above 110 may be just too stoned to realize how hot they are.

For an elderly person or someone whose health is fragile to begin with, the survival rate is less than 50%, he says. "It depends on how sick they are when they get to us."

He says the Imperial Valley has fewer cases than other parts of the country because the climate is arid. Down on the Southern States bayou, in the Everglades, and even in the Northeast, 100-plus degrees is much worse than it is in the Western desert.

Cramps, Exhaustion, Bad Mood

Heat cramps and heat exhaustion are not as scary. "These don't directly lead to heat stroke," Obler says, but they are disabling. Both conditions are caused by loss of fluid and electrolytes -- salt, potassium, and magnesium -- through sweating. Heat exhaustion is just what it sounds like. Blood pressure drops and circulation decreases, which causes fatigue, fainting, or collapse. Heat cramps set in after strenuous exercise in hot conditions. They're painful, but not too serious.

Doctors treat heat exhaustion and cramps by replacing lost fluids and electrolytes, sometimes intravenously. The first-aid tent at a summer marathon is a good place to see how they do it. Often dozens of stricken runners will be stretched out on cots, hooked up to IV tubes or chugging Gatorade.

Oppressive heat hurts more than the body. Heat also makes you feel apathetic and dulls your concentration, which can hurt your work performance and lead to accidents. The National Occupational Safety and Health Administration (NOSHA) takes heat seriously.

NOSHA recommends that workers gradually expose themselves over 10-14 days to the heat, so they can acclimate. They should also have a cool place to rest -- where the temperature is about 76 degrees -- and drink five to seven ounces of water every 15-20 minutes, or two to three gallons a day.

The same precautions against heat sickness apply at home and about town. Drink a lot of water, wear lightweight clothing, and never, ever leave a child locked in a car.

Stay in the shade when you can, and use air-conditioning whenever possible. If you don't have air-conditioning in your home or car, go someplace that does before you overheat: Catch a movie, stroll around the mall, or linger a while over the ice-cream selection in a grocery freezer. You don't want to take a trip to the ER just because you thought you could take the heat.

5 Common Emergencies

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EMERGENCY: Choking.

You're talking at the dinner table, and someone starts coughing. When does it become an emergency? "When they're coughing, it's OK, because there is air movement, they are breathing," Navarro says. "If they're not making any noise whatsoever, their face is getting red, you need to do the Heimlich maneuver. At that point, they are not breathing."

The universal sign for choking is a hand clutched to the throat, with thumb and fingers extended. If a person displays this sign, dial 911 or call for emergency medical assistance. Don't leave the person unattended.

Caution: "If they're coughing, doing the Heimlich can make it worse," he adds. Also, hitting a choking person on the back can make the situation worse -- the food may go back into the windpipe. "They need to work it out themselves; leave them alone, until they reach a point where there's no airway noise."

Take time now to familiarize yourself with directions on the Heimlich maneuver, he suggests. Directions available online at www.ecrmc.org.

EMERGENCY: Bleeding.

"When someone cuts their finger, they think they're going to bleed to death," says Navarro. "People don't understand that there are nine units of blood in the body. The parts of the body that bleed a lot are the head, fingers, and toes. But they won't bleed to death."

Nosebleeds can have a serious cause, like high blood pressure, or they can be caused by chronic nose picking. "If someone with high blood pressure has a serious nosebleed, you're looking at potential disaster," advises Navarro.

Rule of thumb: "When something scares you, call 911 or go to the hospital," he says. "We can say whether it's an emergency or not."

A cut tendon may be more problematic than the bleeding, he says. "It may need to be closed with sutures, or they may never be able to use that finger again. We hear it all the time, men who say, 'I'm fine, I'm fine.' They need to have that cut looked at."

Don't make a tourniquet: "We don't use tourniquets anymore," says Navarro. "They cause too much damage to tissues. We advise putting direct pressure on the site. Even if it's a partial amputation, put a rag around it, hold it tight."

EMERGENCY: Seizure.

The symptoms of seizures vary. The person may fall down and/or make erratic movements. Or their head might jerk and eyes flutter. This can happen to children who have a high fever, to someone with epilepsy, or when someone is having a stroke.

Any seizure warrants medical attention. Call 911. While waiting for paramedics, make sure the person does not hurt themselves. "If they fall down, get everyone away from them," says Navarro. "Don't get near them; they could hurt you. Don't try to put something in the person's mouth (as used to be advised); it's too dangerous. Also, watch the clock -- how long the seizure lasts."

For more information or to enroll in a First-Aid, CPR, CPR for Children, or other educational course contact the Education Department at (760) 339-7377 for a class schedule. Enrollees will receive a free pocket first-aid kit.

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Summer Fun For Kids

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beach towels, swimming pools, bicycles, anything under the sun. Your toddler will know the names of these items before summer is over!!

Swimming lessons: "Swimming lessons are great for toddlers as young as 2 or 3," says Tristan, "and your whole family can enjoy this activity."

While swimming lessons for toddlers is a good way to beat the heat and introduce them to water, remember that children this age should never be left alone around pools. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "teaching your child how to swim DOES NOT mean your child is safe in water," especially toddlers.

Classic pastimes: Games of old are great year round, but even better inside in the summer. "There are very simple games toddlers really enjoy, like duck duck goose and ring around the rosey," says West. "Toddlers also love tunnels and forts -- you can either buy them or make them out of cushions and blankets. And if you're ready for some noise, give your toddler pots and pans to play with, or go for a quieter version, and give them Tupperware!"

Preschoolers

From ants on a log to chalk on a sidewalk, here are ideas that will keep kids 3-5 happy all summer long.

Simple kitchen projects: "Projects with preschoolers in the kitchen are always supervised and simple," says West. "Make ants on a log using celery, peanut butter, and raisins and let the child do most of the work -- they'll love it."

Other simple preschooler projects for the kitchen: trail mix, apples and peanut butter, and for a hot summer day treat, ice cream sandwiched by cookies.

Arts and crafts: "Drawing with lots of different papers is a great activity for preschool kids," says West. "Give them different kinds of markers, pens, pencils, finger paint, chalk, and chalk paint."

Let kids paint to their heart's content over spread out trash bags, and unfolded newspapers, and cleanup will be a snap. For added fun Popsicle sticks and Legos are also great -- helping them build and create things, which assist development skills.

Day trips: "With kids this age, and older kids, get a feel for what they're interested in at the start of summer," says West. "Take them to local museums, parks, interesting businesses, and regional attractions and wander around and watch them react to their surroundings and new, interesting sights, smells, noises, and people. This is a terrific way to learn about your child."

School Kids

Kids 5-12 are more independent and able to engage in long-term, or multi-day projects.

Journal entries: "One really cool activity is journaling," says West. "Older kids can write in their journal, and younger kids can draw. Parents can get an attractive journal, colorful pens and pencils, and give your kids some quiet time when they journal on a recommended topic."

From their favorite summer vacation to their favorite school subject, kids will write and draw about anything. The activity can be a private one, or it can be group. "This

activity builds self-awareness, as well as writing and reading skills while they're away from school in the summer," says Tristan.

Center stage: "For a social or emotional activity, suggest a few topics and have your kids write and then perform a play," says Roth. "The kids can work together to write it, act it out, and look for props and costumes, and then they can present the play to their parents, aunts, and uncles. This is also a great activity for a larger group of kids in your neighborhood."

The library? In the summer? "Have older kids get a library card at the beginning of the summer, and then talk about what they enjoyed reading or learning about during the school year and set a schedule or agenda of topics to "read through" during the summer. The continents of the world, the ocean, the desert, space, or the zoo.

Summer is an opportunity for you to spend some time with your kids. Don't let that get lost because of a busy schedule.

"I would encourage parents to think about summer as an opportunity to help kids be independent, but to also do activities together," says West. "If kids are going to play sports, go Rollerblading, play baseball, or swim, if mom or dad helps with this the interaction is very positive for the children."

And when all else fails to keep your kids happy or you've just plain run out of ideas?

If all else fails and the kids are bouncing off the walls, "have a few fun videos on hand that can keep kids amused in the cool of the house," says West.

Let The Games Begin!!!