

Keeping your child

Summer is here and the children want to go out to play. But how can you keep them safe without stopping their fun?

It's a difficult task so here are a few facts about the dangers, and some tips from the experts.



In 2002 about 320 children aged under 15 years died in the UK as the result of accidents. Each year over two million children are taken to hospital after an accident.

So why is this?

"Children have different accidents at different stages," says the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT). "Babies and toddlers have most accidents in the home, as this is where they spend most of the time, and typically their accidents will be as a result of inexperience or poor coordination.

"By school age children have fewer accidents at home and more on the roads, at school and at play. Often these accidents are as a result of increased risk taking as children begin to test their limits." Boys are more likely to have accidents than girls, says CAPT.

"This may be because boys are more exposed to risk – more active, out and about more, more boisterous or aggressive or more subject to peer pressure. Boys are approximately twice as likely as girls to have accidents."

Children's risk of accidents can be reduced greatly by some basic safety rules, says the trust.

Garden Safety

Every year 137,000 children under 14 attended to hospital after being injured in the garden.

- Make sure children can't get out onto roads or other people's land. Keep gates locked and bolted and make sure hedges and fences have no gaps.
- Fill in garden ponds. If you can't do this make sure it is fenced off or covered. A small child can drown in just 5cm of water.
- Paddling pools should be emptied straight away after use and put away or turned upside down.
- Lock garden tools away. Never leave electrical equipment plugged in when not in use.
- Keep all chemicals such as weed killers locked away and out of reach. Always leave them in their original containers – never transfer them to food jars or drinks bottles.
- Never let children near lit barbecues or bonfires. Remember these stay very hot long after use.
- Clear up dog or cat mess.
- Avoid having dangerous plants in your garden. Plants with berries are appealing to children but can be dangerous and avoid prickly plants that can damage children's eyes.
- Check play equipment regularly for loose nuts or bolts.
- Never position play equipment over paving or concrete – it should be over something soft like grass or a mat.
- Keep the washing line well above children's heads and away from play equipment.

Water Safety

Most unintentional drownings happen in the summer months.

In 2002, 35 children under 14 years old were drowned in Britain. 21 of these children were under 5. 7 were aged 5-9 and 7 were aged 10-14. As well as these fatalities, 200 children were taken to hospital after nearly drowning. Near drowning can result in permanent disability.

The most common place for younger children to drown is in the home or garden. Out of the 21 under 5's who drowned in 2002, 14 of them did so in the bath.

Older children are more likely to drown while playing outside the home.

Avoid drowning by:-

- Never leaving a child under the age of 6 in the bath, near a pond or a paddling pool without an adult to supervise them.
- Fill in garden ponds – they make good sand pits! If you can't do this make sure the pond is fenced off or covered. A small child can drown in just 5cm of water.
- Paddling pools should be emptied straight away after use and put away or turned upside down.
- Be sure toddlers can't get into other people's gardens – they may have a pond or pool.
- Always supervise children closely when playing near water such as the beach, at swimming pools, canals, in the garden with paddling pools or in parks or gardens with water.

SAFE!

- When on holiday check out the environment for any water hazards such as rivers, canals, unfenced ponds or pools.
- Teach children water safety as they get older.
- Encourage them to learn to swim.
- Teach them to only swim in safe places like public pools where there are trained lifeguards.
- Explain to them why they should never swim in canals, weirs or quarries.

Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian injury is the leading cause of accidental death of children in Great Britain. In 2003 there were 74 pedestrians under the age of 16 killed.

2,307 children were seriously injured and in total, 12,544 children injured.

The majority of these accidents happen close to home on residential streets. Children do not have the ability to judge speed, distance, and danger accurately until around the age of 11.

And children above this age are easily distracted.

Almost twice as many boys than girls are killed or seriously injured as pedestrians. Parents should:

- Take care not to overestimate their children's ability to cope with traffic.
- Hold their child's hands and don't let young children run ahead
- Look out for and encourage your child to be aware of hidden entrances or driveways crossing the pavements
- Put reins on a younger child
- Make sure their child walks on the side of the pavement away from the traffic
- Don't let a child out alone or even with an older child
- Be careful when their child walks near a car that could be reversing
- Always set a good example by choosing a safe places to cross and explaining what you're doing
- Tell your child that it's safest to cross at a pedestrian crossing or a crossing patrol
- Tell your child not to cross where they can't see far along the road, or between parked cars
- Explain why you stop, listen and look both ways when crossing the road, and talk about it when you are out together.



Internet Safety

Help you child surf in safety.

- Place the computer where the whole family can use it, rather than out of site in a bedroom.

• Search out positive and fun sites. Many TV programmes suggest good sites to visit. Talk with your children to agree what kinds of sites they are allowed to view. Check the history bar to check that they are staying within the agreed limits.

Tell your kids not to give out their personal details, including their name, address, telephone number or school to anyone over the net. Use of an online nickname can help here, as long as they don't pretend to be a completely different person.

- Make sure they don't accept gifts from strangers, or arrange meetings with new friends unless you go with them.
- Make sure your children are as cautious of strangers online as they would be in the world outside. If they see or receive any obscene, abusive or threatening messages, they shouldn't respond. They should let you know, and you should consider telling your Internet service provider.
- Some chat rooms are moderated, so messages get screened to some extent, but this is not an absolute guarantee.
- Filtering software is available but filters aren't foolproof - sites and users can get round them - so do stay involved.
- Make sure your children know that they should tell you if they come across anything bad. If you or your child come across material that is illegal, be prepared to report it to the Internet service provider and the Internet Watch Foundation.
- Limit the time your child spends online - it stops the Internet taking over their lives.

Stranger Danger

Often we teach our children to be well-mannered when speaking to adults - but will they then want to be polite to strangers?

Also teach children to

- Never talk to strangers
- Never take sweets or gifts from strangers
- Never go with a stranger, no matter who they say they are.
- Teach your children that strangers are people who do not visit your home, and you and your parents do not go to theirs.
- Teach them to always stay with others when playing out or away from home and to look after younger brothers, sisters and friends while playing out.
- Make sure you know where they are going, and with whom and what time they will be back
- Tell them about strangers and the need to inform a parent, teacher, police or an adult if they are approached by a stranger.
- Teach them never to go for a walk with a stranger or get into a stranger's car, whatever excuse he or she uses.

