

School Holiday Parent Kit

CHILD SAFETY

In addition to spending more free time in the home and around the neighbourhood, summer holidays are a time when many families entertain and visit friends and relatives. Unfamiliar places can be full of hazards for smaller children. Parents should be mindful that while adults are catching up socially, children will actively look for alternative entertainment.

Consequently, summer holidays can be a hazardous time of the year. Here are some tips to help your family have a safe summer holiday.

WHEN ENTERTAINING & DRINKING ALCOHOL

The combination of summer, Christmas and the New Year provides plenty of opportunities to entertain and visit friends and relatives. Keep watch on alcoholic drinks and make sure they are not left where small hands can reach them.

Similarly, a bowl of nuts or an ashtray left on a coffee table can pose a major choking hazard for a young child. Cigarettes and butts can poison children. Cigarette lighters should not be left around where children can get access to them.

If visiting someone else's home, be mindful that they may not have child proofed danger areas such as kitchens and bathrooms. Even bedrooms can be dangerous if pills, medications or small coins are left by the bedside.

If you are at a house with a pool, the Water Safety fact sheet in this series includes important information about pool safety.

CHRISTMAS TREES, DECORATIONS & LIGHTS

Small Christmas decorations are particularly fascinating for young children. Make sure they are kept out of reach as they may pose choking hazards.

Remember that Christmas trees can tip over when tugged. Christmas lights can also pose electrical hazards for inquisitive young children.

For advice on how to make your Christmas safe call Kidsafe on (02) 9845 0890.

CHRISTMAS TOYS AND STOCKING FILLERS

Each year the NSW Office of Fair Trading detects new toys which have the potential to harm young children.

- Age labelling such as 'not suitable for children under three' is not an indicator of skill, but means that there are small parts which may be swallowed. As a rule of thumb, anything that fits into a 35 millimetre film canister is a choking hazard for a child under the age of three.
- Projectile toys can be dangerous, particularly for young children.
- Toy chests and boxes should be designed not to close on top of children, or should have a removable lid.
- Be mindful of ventilation when buying children equipment such as tents and masks.
- Check toys for sharp edges or rough surfaces as they can cause cuts or splinters.

- Toys on wheels may roll onto a road or out of a safe area. They should only be used in a fenced area with a gate.

For more information visit the NSW Office of Fair Trading website at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

HOME RENOVATIONS

The holiday period is a great chance to get some of those odd jobs done around the home - but the combination of renovations and children can be dangerous.

- Make sure you keep children away from the site where work is underway as this not only poses a risk to them, but could also be a danger to the person at work.
- Ensure all ladders, tool boxes, power tools and cords are not left lying around.
- Check that floor coverings are not loose as this may cause a tripping hazard.
- Leave windows wide open to air paint smells – but ensure that access to high windows is blocked off for young adventurers.

POISONING

Common products that can be poisonous to your child include prescription medicines, cough and cold preparations, paracetamol, oral contraceptives and topical antiseptics. Other risks include products for cleaning, gardening and the car, as well as insecticides, perfumes, paint, plants and insects.

Poisoning can occur through swallowing, skin contact, inhalation or eye contact.

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You can prevent your child being poisoned by:

- storing medicines and chemicals out of sight and reach of children and in a locked cupboard at least 1.5 metres above ground level
- using medicines and chemicals safely. Follow given instructions and return them to storage immediately after use
- buying pharmaceutical products in child resistant containers and using child resistant locks on cupboards or cabinets that store poisons
- ensuring all products are stored in original containers and are clearly labelled
- regularly disposing of unwanted and out-of-date medicines by taking them to your nearest pharmacy for safe disposal
- not calling medicines 'lollies'
- checking that the plants in your garden are not poisonous.

In an emergency call the Poisons Information Centre on 131 126.

IN THE PARK

Familiarise yourself with neighbourhood parks and playgrounds and always check equipment and surfacing to make sure it's in good condition before allowing children to play. Look for broken or vandalised equipment or parts.

Keep an eye out for broken glass which may be a hazard for bare or open-sandaled feet.

Talk with your child about the safest route walking to and from the park. Check that they know safe places to cross the road and safe road crossing procedures, such as holding the hand of a trusted adult (this is explained in more detail below).

ROAD SAFETY FOR SMALLER WHEELS

Rollerblades, roller skates, skateboards, bikes and scooters make great Christmas presents and can also help develop balance skills. But safety equipment must be worn.

Teach children that wearing a helmet when cycling, riding or skating should be as automatic as wearing a seat belt in the car. They should also wear other appropriate safety gear such as knee and elbow pads.

Riding bikes or trikes in driveways can be dangerous. As well as the risk of being hit by

a car, when they're learning, children can accidentally roll onto the road into passing traffic.

Ensure that ride-on toys are appropriate to the age of the child, are stable and that children riding bikes are able to apply the brakes.

Teach young teenagers that bikes are vehicles and they should learn traffic rules before riding them on the road.

Until they are at least ten years old, children should ride their bikes or wheeled toys in a fenced area, away from vehicles, roads or traffic.

Children up to twelve years old and adults accompanying them may cycle on the footpath, unless signs indicate otherwise.

Extra care needs to be taken on footpaths when negotiating driveways, intersections, sideroads and pedestrians.

For further information on road safety issues visit the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) website at www.rta.nsw.gov.au

BEWARE OF DRIVEWAY DANGERS

Be careful not to let children play in driveways. It can be difficult for drivers to see young children, especially when reversing. Prevent danger by keeping children close to you.

STEPPING OUT WITH YOUNG PEDESTRIANS

Being out-and-about in traffic is dangerous for children because:

- their short stature makes it difficult for drivers to see them – preschoolers are particularly vulnerable in driveways where vehicles may be reversing
- they do not have the experience to predict the movement of vehicles
- their short attention span and spontaneous behaviour often leads them to forget about safety
- they have difficulty estimating speed and distance.

Holding the hand of, or close supervision by, a trusted adult is the most important safety advice for young pedestrians – on the footpath, in the car park, and when crossing the road (until they are at least ten).

When crossing roads use a pedestrian crossing,

if available, or cross at the lights. Remind your child that cars don't always stop, even when they should.

EVERY time you cross the road with your child, talk through and explain this procedure.

Darting out or crossing the road between parked cars accounts for the majority of accidents involving child pedestrians, and many sadly occur in full view of an adult.

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REMEMBER

STOP!

One step back from the edge of the kerb

LOOK!

For traffic by turning your head to the right, then the left and back to the right again

LISTEN!

For approaching traffic

THINK!

About whether it is completely safe to cross. Then walk across the road turning your head to both right and left to look and listen for approaching traffic as you go.

NEIGHBOURHOOD ADVENTURES

Older children will often seek to venture past the boundary of their front gate.

Before allowing your older children to bike off to the shop or play footy at the park by themselves, take a dry run with them, pointing out the hazards along the way and explain the safest routes for them to take.

Only allow your children to leave home without you if you know who they will be with and where they are going. Ensure they have a clear destination, such as the shop or park, and a specific timeframe for returning home (such as 30 minutes or an hour).

Stress that they should stay in safe areas such as the park and not wander off to other areas to play – especially not water drains, construction sites and railway tracks.

Ensure children take some friends with them. Provide them with their home telephone number and emergency numbers in case they get into trouble. You should make sure their mobile phone is charged and has credit, or alternatively that they have coins or a phone card for a public phone.

CAR SAFETY

Make sure children are wearing a seat belt or an appropriate child restraint. Check the Kidsafe website (www.kidsafensw.org) or phone Kidsafe on (02) 9845 0898 to ensure your child is using the correct and appropriate child restraint for their height and weight.

It is recommended that children move to a lap-sash belt only when they have outgrown the full booster seat or when their eyes are higher than the back of the full booster seat.

A good adult seat belt fit can be achieved when a child is approximately 145 centimetres tall.

DRIVER SAFETY

The summer holidays are a time when many families set off in the car to visit relatives and friends for Christmas or to go away for a break. This means that there are a lot more cars on the roads.

Three main contributors to the road toll are:

- **Speeding** – the major cause of death and injury on NSW roads. Speed limit signs state the maximum speed you are allowed to drive in good conditions. Make sure you plan ahead and allow time to travel at a safe speed.

- **Alcohol** – significantly affects your driving skills and increases the risk of crashing. It is illegal to drive while you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. To avoid drink driving during the festive season arrange for one parent not to drink, a lift home or to stay overnight.
- **Fatigue** – warning signs include yawning, poor concentration, tired or sore eyes, restlessness, drowsiness, slow reactions and more. If you notice any signs of fatigue when driving, it is time to STOP. REVIVE. SURVIVE. Regular breaks every two hours will help you to avoid fatigue.

TIP

Make sure the whole family knows to call 000 in an emergency, for the ambulance, police or the fire brigade.

Community Services thanks these organisations for their contribution to this fact sheet and invites you to visit their websites for more information.

