

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUMMER ACTIVITIES SAFETY GUIDE

TIPS FOR HAVING SAFE FUN IN THE SUN

Summertime brings children outdoors to enjoy numerous activities at playgrounds, parks, pools and beaches. These fun activities have the potential to result in injuries due to heat, or from more strenuous outdoor action sports. For the health and safety of youth participating in summer programs and camps, it is critical for all service providers to ensure that their employees know how respond to an injury or other health condition affecting a youth participant.

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is providing this Safety Guide containing safety tips so program staff can refer to it should the need arise. DYCD highly recommends that providers hold information meetings with their staff to discuss the safety items presented in the Guide, and others that may be relevant to your specific programs and activities. Providers should also review the safety plans required by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) for all SACC licensed facilities and summer camps.

The information contained in this guide was obtained from both the New York City and New York State Departments of Health, as well as other health organizations. For the users' reference at the end of the Guide there are links to web sites that provide more detailed information. Most importantly, if there is the slightest suspicion that an injury is serious, do not hesitate – CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY. As a reminder, in case of an injury or other incident, the provider must send the DYCD Incident Report Form per instructions found on the form.

Precautions During Extreme Heat

- Plan to hold strenuous play or activities during the coolest times of the day - early morning hours or late afternoons are cooler. Providers should pay close attention to weather and temperature forecasts.
- If participants are engaged in long periods of activity while exposed to the sun, ensure that the participants take frequent breaks, monitor the intensity of the exertion, and if necessary, reduce the activity time.
- Keep participants well hydrated – they should drink plenty of water when engaging in sport activities, even if they do not feel thirsty. Participants should avoid sugary or caffeinated drinks.
- Participants should wear thin, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing that cover the body and as much skin as possible.
- Participants should apply sunscreen protection with an SPF of 15 or greater to all exposed body areas. Sunscreen should be re-applied every two hours or after swimming or sweating.
- Program supervisors overseeing activities in open areas should ensure that participants seek shade as much as possible. If participants must be in the sun for extended periods, they should wear a hat to shade the face and head.
- Providers should be aware of their participants' medical conditions, e.g. asthma, which may be aggravated by extreme heat.
- DYCD highly recommends that providers enroll in Notify NYC at nyc.gov. Providers will receive notifications concerning heat advisories and other helpful information.

Concussions in Children

PARENTS OF A CHILD THAT HAS SUFFERED A HEAD INJURY MUST BE TOLD OF THE INJURY SO THEY CAN MONITOR THE CHILD. The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be subtle and may not be immediately apparent. The symptoms can last for days, weeks or even longer.

Initial Response

The most common symptoms after a concussion are headache, amnesia and confusion. The amnesia, which may or may not be preceded by a loss of consciousness, almost always involves the loss of memory of the impact that caused the concussion. **SEEK EMERGENCY CARE IMMEDIATELY** for anyone who experiences a head injury and:

- A loss of consciousness lasting more than a minute
- Repeated vomiting
- Seizures
- Obvious difficulty with mental function or physical coordination
- Symptoms that worsen over time

Other signs and symptoms of a concussion may include:

- Headache or a feeling of pressure in the head
- Confusion or feeling as if in a fog
- Dizziness or "seeing stars"

Follow-up Monitoring After a Head Injury

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a child be taken to a doctor for a medical evaluation if the child suffers anything more than a light bump on the head. If the child remains alert, moves normally and is responsive, the injury is probably mild and usually doesn't need further testing. If worrisome signs develop later, the child must be taken for emergency care.

DELAYED SYMPTOMS (hours or days after injury):

- Concentration and memory complaints
- Irritability and other personality changes
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Sleep disturbances

NON-VERBAL clues of a concussion may include:

- Listlessness, easily tiring, irritability, crankiness
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Lack of interest in favorite toys
- Loss of balance, unsteady walking

Participants should NOT return to play or vigorous activity while signs or symptoms of a concussion are present. Experts recommend that a person with a suspected concussion not return to play until he or she has been medically evaluated. Medical experts also recommend that children and adolescent athletes with a concussion not return to play on the day of injury.

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Playground Safety

By following a few simple precautionary steps, program providers can play a major role in preventing playground injuries.

- Always ensure that there is an appropriate number of staff supervising the children that are playing in the various pieces of equipment - one of the best ways to prevent falls is monitoring to ensure that playground equipment is used properly.
- Make sure children use age-appropriate equipment.
- Ensure that there is ample room between play equipment to act as a buffer zone in case the child falls.
- Be careful on hot surfaces. Metal and rubber surfaces can become very hot on sunny summer days and burn bare skin. Make sure children keep their shoes on at the playground – and give surfaces like slides a “test touch” before sitting on them.
- Check equipment for signs of deterioration – all equipment must be in good structural condition. Check for signs of rust, chipped paint, and cracked, broken or sharp parts. If there are hazards do not permit use of the equipment.
- Be aware of spaces where a child's head or body could get stuck. A child's head can be trapped in openings between three and a half and nine inches wide.
- Remove all drawstrings from a child's clothes and make sure he/she is not wearing any necklaces or scarves while playing; these items could get caught on equipment and strangle a child.
- Do not allow ropes, jump ropes, clotheslines, or pet leashes to be fastened to playground equipment as they can strangle children.

Swimming Safety

Swimming is a great way to get exercise while staying cool in the summer, but remember to follow these key safety tips.

- Children should learn how to swim. The New York City Parks Department offers a variety of free swim programs. To learn more, call 311 or visit: http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_things_to_do/programs/ap_aquatics.html
- Providers must follow the guidelines of the DOHMH Summer Camp Safety Plan where applicable, e.g. assessing the participants’ swimming ability.
- Always ensure that there is an appropriate number of staff supervising the children that are swimming.
- Supervise children closely. Practice keeping younger children within the length of an arm and have them swim with a buddy.
- Swim only in designated areas when lifeguards are on duty and always obey the lifeguards’ instructions.
- If swimming at the beach, providers should check for rip currents and other water conditions.
- Provider staff should learn CPR. See below for web site resources for CPR classes in NYC.
- Providers should monitor beach advisories for closures and water quality warnings by calling 311 or visiting www.nyc.gov/health/beach.

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Web Sites for Additional Information

- Medically reviewed printable safety guides on common children's injuries and health:
http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/#cat20221

- For extreme heat hazards
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/hazards/heat.shtml>

To register for weather related advisories and other emergency notifications
<https://a858-nycnotify.nyc.gov/notifynyc/>

- Additional medical information on concussions
<http://www.pedsforparents.com/articles/2824.shtml>
- Injury prevention - New York State Department of Health
http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/children/
- Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/html/cpr/index.shtml>