



PATIENT EDUCATION

# *Keeping Your Child Safe From Injuries*

MAYO CLINIC CHILDREN'S CENTER



BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS  
PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

## Mayo Clinic Children's Center

*For more than 100 years, teams of physicians have cared for children at Mayo Clinic*

### T. DENNY SANFORD PEDIATRIC CENTER MAYO EUGENIO LITTA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

#### *Pediatric Sub-Specialties in the following areas:*

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Allergy, Immunology and Pulmonology	Neurology
Anesthesiology	Neuropsychology
Cardiology	Neurosurgery
Cardiovascular Surgery	Ophthalmology
Community Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine	Orthopedic Surgery
Critical Care	Otorhinolaryngology
Dental	Pain and Palliative Care Consulting Service (Inpatient)
Dermatology	Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Emergency Medicine (Emergency Dept.)	Psychiatry & Psychology
Endocrinology and Metabolism	Pulmonology (see Allergy, Immunology & Pulmonology)
Gastroenterology and Hepatology	Radiation Oncology
General Medicine	Radiology
Genetics (Medical)	Rheumatology
Gynecology	Speech Pathology
Hematology and Oncology	Surgery (Pediatric)
Immunology (see Allergy, Immunology & Pulmonology)	Transplant
Infectious Diseases	Urology
Neonatology (Neonatal ICU)	
Nephrology	

#### *Pediatric Specialty Clinics:*

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Cerebral Palsy/Spina Bifida Clinic	Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic
Chemotherapy/Radiation Long-Term Effects Clinic	Immunodeficiency Disorders Clinic
Child Advocacy/Child Abuse	Long QT Syndrome Clinic
Congenital Heart Clinic	Neuromuscular Clinic
Craniofacial Clinic	Pain Rehabilitation Center (3-wk outpatient)
Cystic Fibrosis Clinic	Pain Clinic (Outpatient consult)
Diabetes Clinic	Sleep Medicine Center
Epilepsy Clinic (Intractable)	Spinal Deformities Clinic
Hemophilia/Coagulopathy Clinic	Sports Medicine Center
	Travel Clinic

# What Are the Most Common Reasons for Trips to the ER?

1. **Falls.** Most often, children fall from a second-floor window, a tree, a grocery store cart, playground equipment, and kitchen counters. *Each of these could happen any time of year.*
2. **Vehicle crashes.** Most crashes involve an ATV (all-terrain vehicle), motorcycle or car.
3. **Recreational activities.** Backyard sports, bike riding, trampolines, swing sets, and Heelys™ — skateboards, rollerblades, and scooters — are common causes of injuries.

Every day in the United States children are rushed to hospitals  
with injuries that can take a long time to recover from.  
*Some kids don't recover at all.*

This resource tells you some of the best ways to try to keep your child safe.

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# You Can Help Prevent Most Injuries for Your Child

By following the ideas here, you may be able to save your child from a very serious injury. If you have any questions after you read this, please talk to your child's health care provider.

## Be a good role-model for your child

Make safety a big part of your life and the lives of your family members every day. For example:

- Be safe when you are driving and be a good role model: wear your seat belt; don't use a cell phone; don't text; use your turn signals; be ready to brake; don't speed. As needed, remind your child that you need to focus on driving.
- Use proper footwear for your activities and wear a helmet when you are biking, skateboarding, skiing, etc. And don't forget other padding as needed.
- As you make meals, tell your kids what you are doing to be safe. For example, turn the handles of pots and pans away from the front of the stove; use hot pads; and be very careful when you use a knife. When you carry scissors or a knife, be sure to carry it pointing down.
- Take care of your skin and your body. Protect yourself and your child from frostbite and sunburns. Wear protective clothing and hats, plus sun-block when needed.

## Talk to your kids and decide together about safety rules

Make a list for the common activities and the rules for each activity. Tape copies of the list where the kids will see them or where they need to use the rules.

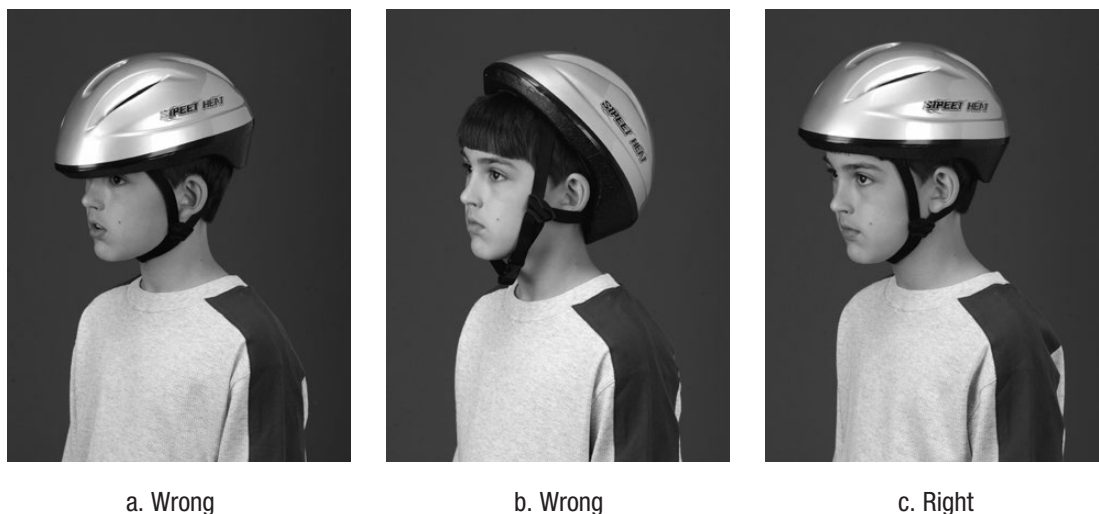
## Make sure your kids wear the right protection for their activity

Depending on the activity, your child may need eyewear; pads for the neck, shoulders, elbows, chest, knees, and front of the lower legs (shins); a helmet, mouthpiece and face guard; and a protective cup for boys.

When your child wears a bike helmet, it should:

- Be level and low on the forehead, just above the eyebrows.
- Touch all the way around the head. Use sponge pads to fill some space or buy a helmet that fits better, as needed.
- Form a "Y" just below each ear with the front and rear straps. The strap should fit close to your skin. No more than one or two fingers should be able to slide, laying flat against the skin, under the strap.
- Have a snug chinstrap. You should only be able to slide one finger between the strap and chin. See Figure 1.





**Figure 1.** How not to wear a bike helmet (Figures a and b) and how to correctly wear a bike helmet (Figure c)

### **Praise your kids and remind them about being safe**

Be sure to give a quick word of praise when you see your kids doing the right thing. When you are positive, it will help train their brains to want to do the right thing.

Look for moments to make a quick comment about safety, such as:

- When they ask to go to an event or activity.
- When you see other kids being safe or not being safe. Share positive feedback so your child will learn that other kids do the right things too. If another child is not being safe, ask your kids what the child should do instead.

**These don't have to be long talks.** Something like this will work: "If you promise you will (add specific rules), you can go." Or, "Hmmm, what kind of safety gear should he have on?" Wait for the answer then add, "I'm glad you kids wear the right protection when you ride."

### **Partner with your child's health care provider**

If you have any questions about your child's **medical needs**, talk to his or her health care provider.

#### **Around age 8 children begin to separate...**

**from their parents or guardians.** They may not want to obey your rules. They may try to do daring things — while telling you that they won't do those activities. And they'll look to their friends for approval.

Knowing all of that, your child can still learn safety rules with your help. **It takes many weeks and many reminders to learn something new and make a habit of it.**

## Use car seats

- Children younger than 12 years should ride in the correct car seat or booster until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall and between 8 and 12 years of age.
- The best car seat is the one that fits your vehicle and your child and that you use correctly every time.
- **The safest place in a car for all children, at any age, is in the back seat.**
- Do not get or buy used car seats from friends, garage sales or second-hand shops. If you do plan to do that, look for the expiration date. It's usually about six years. After that date, the seat should be taken apart and put in the garbage. Also, ask whether the seat has ever been in a car that was in an accident. If you can't get that information, avoid buying the seat. Typically, car seats should be destroyed and thrown away after being in an accident. This is true even if you can't see any damage to the seat. Contact the car seat maker to learn more.
- Look at the car seat label to make sure it's right for your child's age, weight and height.

## Avoid burns

- Protect your child from sunburn. Have him or her wear protective clothing, sun-block and hats. Explain why it's important. Many cases of adult skin cancer are believed to have been caused by sunburns people had years earlier, even during childhood. (Have your child wear sunglasses as needed too.)
- Cook with your child. Talk about kitchen safety as you explain how to make the food. Teach your child how to avoid hot spills if they reach into a microwave that's above their head. **Hot liquids, hot food and hot pans can cause third-degree burns. The scars could last a lifetime.**
- Keep children away from hot areas of lawn mowers and motorcycles. Tell them which parts are hot.
- Carefully watch kids when they are near a fireplace, grill or outdoor campfire. Some clothing fabric can melt simply from a fire spark.

### Know the rules for organized sports

Be sure you know the rules — and know the coaches — if your child plays in a school or community sport. **There may be many safety and sportsmanship rules that you could support with praise and reminders.**

# Be Safe in the Spring

## Indoor activities

Spring often brings open windows. Open windows are inviting to kids. An open window increases the risk that a child may play near it and fall out of the window.

- Make sure every window has a good-fitting screen in it. **However, remember that window screens were not made to keep a child from falling out.**
- Install safety locks on all windows that are above ground.
- Do not let kids play near windows.
- Do not put furniture near windows. This could increase the risk of falling out of the window.
- Don't ask a younger child to clean windows alone. Older children may help an adult as long as they work side-by-side.

## Outdoor activities

Many head injuries could be prevented if people wore safety gear and followed safety measures, including traffic laws.

**Kids who wear helmets reduce their risk of head injury by about 85 percent.**

- Young children should ride bikes, skateboards, rollerblades, scooters and any similar items only off the street and only when an adult is with them.
- Children who ride bikes must follow the rules of the road. Your child should:
  - Wear bright-colored clothing. Put reflectors on the bike so cars can see your child easier.
  - Ride with traffic. That is, he or she should ride a bike in the same direction that you would drive a car on that road.
  - Stop and look both ways before entering a street.
  - Stop at all street corners, called intersections — stop at the ones marked with signs and at unmarked areas, such as alley entrances. Don't assume that cars will stop for your child, even if they see him or her.
  - Use hand signals and look in all directions before turning. Your child should make eye contact to be sure the other people see him or her.
- Children should learn how to keep their bikes working correctly. Parents and kids should check the tires, brakes, and seat and handlebar height at least once per year. If you aren't sure how the bike should work, take it to a bike-repair shop for an inspection. Be sure your child understands how each part of the bike should work.

# Be Safe in the Summer

## Water safety

If your family enjoys boating, sailing, canoeing, or using personal watercrafts, everyone should wear good-fitting life jackets or use life preservers.

- Teach your child how to put on his or her own life jacket. It should always be worn as instructed with all straps fastened.
- Never use blow-up water wings, toys, rafts, and air mattresses as life jackets or life preservers. They were not made for that use. They likely won't protect your child.
- **Teach your child to always enter the water feet first. He or she should never dive into shallow water or water they don't know well.**
- Never allow anyone to swim in canals or fast-moving water.

## Swimming

- **Even if your child uses life jackets or life preservers, an adult should be nearby at all times when kids are in or near water.** Kids who have taken swim lessons should be watched too.
- Backyard pools are not "safer" than lakes when it comes to the risk of drowning.
- People of all ages should always swim with a buddy. Teach young kids how to get help if it's needed.

## Lawn & mowing safety

**Never allow children to ride as passengers on ride-on lawn mowers or garden tractors.** Each year, many children are seriously injured or killed using these machines or being near them.

- **Other people and pets should not be in the yard when someone is mowing or trimming weeds.** Rocks, sticks and other items often fly out when the mower blade or trimmer's line hits them.
- Kids should be at least 12 years of age before they use a walk-behind power lawnmower or hand mower. They should be at least 16 before they use a riding lawn mower. Before you allow a child to do yard work, especially mowing the lawn or using a weed-trimmer, take time to show him or her how to do the job safely. This includes protecting their:
  - Eyes with safety goggles.
  - Hearing with ear plugs or headphones.
  - Feet with tennis shoes or boots.



- Any child or adult who does yard work should wear eye goggles, shoes, and jeans to help protect their legs. Use ear plugs as needed.
- Never allow your child to mow or use a weed-eater alone. A responsible adult should be nearby and check on the child once in a while.
- Make sure the machine's protective gear works well, such as guards, shields, the grass catcher, and any other safety gear.

### **Fireworks and fires**

- Carefully watch kids when they are near a fireplace, grill or outdoor campfire. Some clothing fabric can melt simply from a fire spark.
- Only buy and use fireworks that are legal in your state or town.
- **Never** allow kids to light fireworks.
- Consider using earplugs or other hearing protection.
- Always have an adult nearby when someone is using sparklers or other fireworks and when there is a campfire or bonfire.

### **Other outdoor safety**

- Go inside if there is lightning nearby or you hear thunder.
- Check your child for ticks and other bug bites after each outdoor activity.
- Be sure your child drinks enough water when the temperature and humidity are high. If the weather is really hot, make sure that any kids under your care take breaks in a cool, airy place every hour or so. "Heat exhaustion" can become very dangerous very quickly.
- Use sunscreen and use bug spray with DEET. Follow the directions on the product label.
- Avoid using trampolines. If your kids do use one, there should be a tall net around the sides and only one child at a time should be on the trampoline.

### **Around animals**

All kids should:

- Ask the owner if it's OK to go near the animal — even if they know the animal. If they don't know the animal, they should stay away from it.
- Tell you if a strange animal is nearby.
- Respect animals and never tease them or try to scare them. Animals that are eating, sleeping, caring for their young, startled, or scared are likely to bite.
- Wear a helmet and other protective gear when riding a horse.

# Be Safe in the Fall and Winter

## Gun safety

- If you have a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place. Keep the bullets in a separate locked place. Avoid keeping bullets in the same locked box as a gun.

## Protect the body

- Dress for the weather. Children should wear many lightweight, warm layers if they are out in cold, wet weather. Examples include thermal long underwear, one or two shirts, pants, sweater, coat, snow pants, warm socks, insulated boots, gloves or mittens, a hat, and a scarf.
- Check the skin. If your child complains of numbness or pain in the fingers, toes, nose, cheeks or ears after playing outdoors, it may be frostbite. Frostbite is also a risk if the skin is blistered, sensitive to touch or looks shiny or glossy. Look for pictures of frostbite on the Internet if needed.

## Sledding, snow skiing and snowboarding

**Never sled, ski or snowboard alone.** Kids, especially, should be supervised by a trusted adult to whom they will listen.

**Head injuries are some of the most common injuries from high-speed winter sports, including sledding.** Most snow collisions are with fixed objects, such as trees, or with other people on the hill. **The faster your child goes, the higher their risk of injury is.**

- Wear a helmet and encourage your family and friends to do the same. Learn about the benefits and limitations of the helmets sold today. It may not be illegal to ski or snowboard without a helmet where you live, but these activities are just as risky as riding a motorcycle.
- Wear sunglasses or other eye protection — even on cloudy days.
- Protect your skin — even on cloudy days.

### *Sledding*

- Only allow sledding on land that you know well. It should be clear of anything that could harm your child or the sled. Examples include rocks, trees, bushes, and other objects.
- Make sure the bottom of the hill, or slope, is far away from streets and traffic.
- Use sleds that your child can steer. Do not use homemade sleds.
- Tell kids to sit up, facing forward when they sled. **No one should ride downhill when they are lying on their abdomen, head first on a sled.** This position increases the chance of head and abdomen injuries.
- Never allow anyone to ride in a sled pulled by a motorized vehicle.

### *Snow skiing, snowmobiling and snowboarding*

For the best experience, kids should:

- Take *at least* one or two skiing lessons before they start to ski.
- Test the ski-boot bindings. The release properties should be tested each year in a certified shop. Every day you and your kids ski you should test the bindings by kicking out of them. Bindings should be no more than 3 to 4 years old. Some of the material used in the bindings breaks down over time. This can't be seen by looking at the bindings.
- Not *wrap* the ski-pole straps around their wrists or hands.
- Only ski if they feel in control. Extra care is needed when getting on and off a ski lift.

Do not buy a snowmobile or an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) for your child. Do not allow your child to ride as a passenger on these vehicles without a helmet. Young children do not have the strength, reaction time or judgment to ride safely.

# Be Safe on the Farm

**Farming can be an incredibly rewarding job. It can also be a very dangerous job some days.** Kids, especially, are at high risk for injury on a farm. If you live on a farm, please think about the following suggestions as you work to keep your family safe.

- Teach your kids to always tell an adult when they go outside.
- **Never allow kids to operate farm machinery.**
- Make sure that anyone who uses equipment is properly trained first.
- Keep all equipment guards and safety devices in place.
- Try not to work on a farm alone and tell your kids not to do this. Someone should be in the house or nearby and aware of what you are doing. It's a good idea to call someone on a regular schedule, such as every 2 to 3 hours, if you are working on a farm alone.
- Be careful when you and your kids are near or in tractors, threshers/combines, lawn mowers, and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). These powerful machines and other types of farm equipment are not safe for kids to ride on or be around — even when an adult is nearby. It's very easy to get thrown from these machines. Machines with cabs are not safer than machines without cabs. A fall from a machine could cause a head injury. This is true for machines that are off too.
- Do not allow kids to ride in the open bed of a pick-up truck.
- Warn kids to:
  - Stay away from moving machine parts, such as PTO shafts, gears and belts.
  - Stay away from moving equipment. Many accidents, including getting run over, happen by falling into equipment.
  - Never ride on a grain wagon. Never go into a silo or grain bin. It's easy to be trapped by flowing grain. **Closed storage areas can fill in seconds and suffocate a person.**

## Farm animals

Tell any kids on a farm about these rules:

- Ask an adult who knows the animals to approach them with you.
- When you are around farm animals, be calm and move slowly. Do not make sudden movements. Always walk toward an animal from the front so they can see what you are doing. Don't scream or run around them.

# Final Thoughts

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Childhood can be a really fun time of life! But even fun activities have risks. Please, help keep your kids safe.

- Be a good role-model: drive safely, use the right footwear for your activity, use caution in the kitchen, and take care of your skin and body.
- Talk to your kids and decide together about safety rules.
- Make sure your kids wear the right protection, especially their footwear, a helmet and other needed padding.
- Praise your kids and remind them about being safe.
- Partner with your child's primary care provider.
- Use car seats correctly; destroy them when needed.
- Use care to avoid burns.
- Know the rules for organized sports so you can support them.

## For more information

For more information, check these websites.\*

- American Academy of Pediatrics.
- (U.S.) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- (U.S.) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

\* Your health care provider does not sponsor or endorse these websites. Your health care provider cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information on these sites. Websites should not be used to diagnose or treat health conditions.



# Notes

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### BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal patient of Mayo Clinic for more than 40 years. She was a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching, even as she assembled a museum-quality collection of antiques and fine art. She was best known by Mayo staff for her patient advocacy and support.

Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. Mrs. Lips had a profound appreciation for the care she received at Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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