



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

Partner summer fun with summer safety

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For children, summer means running around outside, playing hard, and having fun. There is swimming, bicycle and scooter riding, hiking, running, and jumping on trampolines and diving boards. It's time to try-out, join, and participate in organized sports activities. Children should participate in regular physical activity and not sit in front of the television all summer long! All children should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.

Here are some quick reminders about the importance of physical activity and safety to help prevent serious injury while kids are having fun.

Sports Teams

Before starting on an organized sports team, children and teens should become active in a good overall conditioning program. This can help children learn about their bodies and change their attitudes about lifelong exercise. Good habits will follow them into adulthood!

A medical examination is preferable and often required well in advance of training. A thorough heart exam is also important for teenagers, especially if there is a family history of early death in adults before age 50. Children with a history of significant heart problems or lung hypertension may be counseled against weight training. Running and walking may be better options.

For many, a program that includes strength training can prepare young people for the demands of sports practice and competition. It increases the strength of muscles, tendons, and joints, and improves joint stability which can prevent strains and sprains to ankles and knees. Strength training may also be of special benefit to overweight or obese children who can't tolerate prolonged periods of running or other sports activities. In addition, this type of training can help raise children's metabolism so they burn more calories. Combined with walking and decreasing sugar, junk and fast food, it can go a long way towards helping them lose weight.

Select an Activity with a Qualified Coach

Mature, responsible coaching and supervision of activities is the key to preventing many injuries. Qualified adults should provide supervision and instruction at all times. Adult spotters should actively assist a child when necessary to prevent falls and injuries in case they fail to properly carry out a training exercise.



A well-supervised program that follows proper guidelines must be followed to help prevent serious injury. Monitoring includes ensuring everyone wears appropriate clothing and shoes. Equipment should fit the size of the child. Progress should be slow and gradual. Training should be continued only if the child finds it enjoyable, satisfying, meaningful, and challenging.

“No pain. No gain.” It doesn’t apply to children.

Children should be tired and possibly have achy muscles after exercising. Any injury symptoms that last more than two days should be evaluated by a medical provider. To prevent injury during growth spurts, the intensity and total volume of the training program as well as reports of pain or discomfort in a bone or muscle should be closely monitored and evaluated.

Warm Up/Cool Down

Every period of exercise should begin with a five to 10 minute active warm-up that includes stretching, aerobic exercise and repetitions of light resistance. Warm-up activities increase body temperature and blood flow to the muscles and raise the metabolism.

Fun

Keep it fun! The focus should be on safe training, proper technique, controlled movement and proper breathing, and individual improvement rather than competition when participating in sports or weight training. Progress in anything should be slow and gradual based on consistent exercise, proper technique, and varied workouts to prevent boredom or burnout.

Bicycling

Bicycle accidents can lead to brain injury, broken bones, and abdomen/liver/spleen injuries. These are all significant, sometimes life-threatening, long-term problems.

A recent study found that more than 1/3 of children may be wearing their helmets incorrectly. Some are tilted while others have loose or unfastened chin straps. To help parents properly fit their children’s helmets, the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute developed the following guidelines:

- The helmet should rest just above the eyebrows and not slide around. Use the foam pads to raise or lower the helmet or pad the side space, if necessary
- The straps of the helmet should be adjusted to form a Y just under the child’s ear.
- The chin strap should be snug enough to pull down on the helmet when the child opens the mouth wide.



School-age children have the motor skills to become accomplished bike riders. They may also engage in high-risk behavior and should be reminded to obey all traffic laws. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers the following bicycle safety recommendations for kids:

- Learn the rules of the road.
- Ride with traffic .
- Stop and look both ways before entering the street .
- Stop at all intersections, marked and unmarked .
- Before turning, use hand signals and look all ways.
- Ride in single file and use bicycle paths whenever possible .
- Avoid all trick and double riding.
- Do not ride at dusk or after dark.
- Do not wear loose-fitting clothing. Wear shoes and tie the laces when riding.
- Do not wear earphones while riding .
- Place objects in a backpack or a basket.

Swimming/Diving

Children should always be closely monitored by an adult while swimming and diving. This should not be left to other children.

Adults attending a child in or around water should stay away from distractions such as cooking, talking to other people, or chatting on the phone. Always give your full attention to the child at all times. Running around pools, the use of extra toys or equipment, and being in a crowded location increase the risk of drowning.

If children are going to dive, they should be encouraged to dive feet first with an adult in the water as a spotter. Diving head first is not recommended unless the child has had specific instruction. Diving from the side of a pool significantly increases the risk of a broken neck or back. It is difficult to assess the true depth of the pool by standing on the edge.

Drowning only takes two or three minutes. That is enough time to go inside to check on your roast, turn over a few steaks on the grill or dig through your beach bag for your sunscreen.

Many local pool or recreation centers have swimming lessons to accommodate all ages of children. However, just because a child has passed his or her swim lessons, there is no reason to be less vigilant in watching closely.