



Johns Creek Pediatrics, P.C.

Karen B. Dewling, M.D., F.A.A.P.
Harriette S. Perlstein, M.D., F.A.A.P.
Jennifer R. Looby, M.D., F.A.A.P.
Anna M. Bramwell, M.D., F.A.A.P.

Children, Our Bridge to the Future

4395 Johns Creek Parkway
Suite 150
Suwanee, GA 30024
770-814-1160
FAX 770-814-1173

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www.johnscreekpediatrics.net

WHAT'S THE SCOOP ON SWIM LESSONS?



In the past, the AAP advised against swimming lessons for children ages 1 to 3 because there was little evidence that lessons prevented drowning or resulted in better swim skills, and there was concern parents would become less vigilant about supervising a child who had learned some swimming skills.

But new evidence shows that children ages 1 to 4 may be less likely to drown if they have had formal swimming instruction. The studies are small, and they don't define what type of lessons work best, so the AAP is not recommending mandatory swim lessons for all children ages 1 to 4 at this time. Instead, the new guidance recommends that parents should decide whether to enroll an individual child in swim lessons based on the child's frequency of exposure to water, emotional development, physical abilities, and certain health conditions related to pool water infections and pool chemicals.

The AAP does not recommend formal water safety programs for children younger than 1 year of age.

Safety training does not result in a significant increase in poolside safety skills of young children. If you do enroll a child under four years old in a swimming program, be sure the class you choose adheres to guidelines established by the national YMCA. Among other things, these guidelines forbid submersion of young children and encourage parents to participate in all activities. But remember that even a child who knows how to swim needs to be watched constantly. Whenever your child is near water, follow these safety rules:

1. Children who are swimming—even in a shallow toddler's pool—always should be watched by an adult, preferably one who knows CPR. The adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision" whenever infants, toddlers, or young children are in or around water. Empty and put away inflatable pools after each play session.
2. Enforce safety rules: No running near the pool and no pushing others underwater.
3. Don't allow your child to use inflatable toys or mattresses in place of a life jacket.
4. Backyard swimming pools should be surrounded with at least a 4-foot (1.2 meters) high fence that completely separates the pool from the house. The fence should have a self-closing and self-latching gate that opens away from the pool, with the latch at least 54 inches high. Keep the gate closed and locked at all times. No opening under the fence or between uprights should be more than 4 inches (10 cm) wide.
5. If your pool has a cover, remove it completely before swimming. Also, never allow your child to walk on the pool cover; water may have accumulated on it, making it as dangerous as the pool itself.
6. Spas and hot tubs are dangerous for young children, who can easily drown or become overheated in them.
7. Your child should always wear a life jacket when he swims or rides in a boat. A life jacket fits properly if you can't lift it off over your child's head after he's been fastened into it. For the child under age five, particularly the non swimmer, it also should have a flotation collar to keep the head upright and the face out of the water.
8. Be sure to eliminate distractions while children are in the water. Talking on the phone, working on the computer, and other tasks need to wait until children are out of the water.

Adapted from *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age Five* (Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics)

BUG REPELLENT GUIDE

Chemical Repellents with DEET (N,N-Diethyl-3-Methylbenzamide)	Considered the best defense against biting insects.	3 to 8 hours depending on how much DEET is in the product.	Caution should be used when applying DEET to children.
Repellents Made From Essential Oils Found In Plants Such As Citronella, Cedar, Eucalyptus, and Soybean	Generally much less effective repellents; most give short-term protection.	Usually less than 2 hours.	Allergic reactions are rare, but can occur.
Chemical Repellents with Permethrin	These repellents kill ticks on contact.	When applied to clothing, it lasts even after several washings.	Should only be applied to clothing, not directly to skin. May be applied to outdoor equipment such as
Picaridin 5-10%	Similar protection compared to DEET	3-4 hours	Caution should be used when applying to children.

The following are types of repellents that are not effective:

- Wristbands soaked in chemical repellents
- Garlic or vitamin B1 taken by mouth
- Ultrasonic devices that give off sound waves designed to keep insects away
- Bird or bat houses
- Backyard bug zappers (Insects may actually be attracted to your yard.)



DEET is a chemical used in insect repellents. The amount of DEET in insect repellents varies from product to product, so it's important to read the label of any product you buy. The amount of DEET may range from less than 10% to more than 30%. Studies show that products with higher amounts of DEET protect people longer, but also show that products with greater than 30% don't offer any extra protection.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that repellents should contain no more than 30% DEET when used on children.
- A newer product called Picaridin has been used in Europe and Australia for years. It is available in 5-10% strengths. It is odorless and safe to use on children. It needs to be reapplied every 3-4 hrs and offers similar protection compared to 10% DEET.
- Insect repellents also are not recommended for children younger than 2 months. Do not spray repellents directly onto your child's face. Instead, spray a little on your hands first and then rub it on your child's face. Avoid the eyes and mouth.
- Avoid buying products that combine DEET with sunscreen. The DEET may make the sun protection factor (SPF) less effective. These products can overexpose your child to DEET because the sunscreen needs to be reapplied often.



DON'T FORGET YOUR SUNSCREEN!

Babies under 6 months:

The two main recommendations from the AAP to prevent sunburn are to avoid sun exposure, and dress infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and hats. However when adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least 30 SPF (sun protection factor) to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands.

For Older Children:

- The first, and best, line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat, sunglasses, and cotton clothing with a tight weave.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, and limit sun exposure during the peak intensity hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF should be at least 30 and protect against UVA and UVB rays.



(For more information on AAP guidelines please visit www.healthychildren.org.)