



BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, including newborns and adolescents. BC Children's is an academic health centre affiliated with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the Child & Family Research Institute. For more information, please visit www.bcchildrens.ca.

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information, please visit www.phsa.ca.

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Keep your kids safe this summer July 6, 2009

Vancouver, B.C. – Every summer, there are reports of young children being injured — sometimes killed — during normal activities for a hot, sunny day. And every summer, there is a new group of first-time parents who are unaware of the risks of those summer activities.

“As the temperature rises, so does the number of preventable injuries involving children,” says Dr. Ran Goldman, Medical Director, Emergency Department at BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. “For example, there is an increase in falls from windows; sun and heat-stroke; and drownings and near-drownings. Burns from contact with seat belt straps and car seats also put children at risk over the hot summer months. These incidents can have serious and tragic outcomes.”

With the warm weather here, BC Children's Hospital has summer safety tips for parents and caregivers.

Windows

When the weather warms up, we all love to open the doors and windows to let in a cool breeze. But remember that children are natural climbers and may not understand the risk. A window screen will not stop your child from falling from a window.

- Move furniture away from windows and balcony rails.
- Put window guards on windows above the ground level. These act like a gate in front of the window.
- Or, fasten the windows, so that they cannot open more than 10 centimetres (four inches). In either case, ensure there is a safe release option in case of a house fire.

Water and Pools

Children are drawn to water, but they do not understand the danger and can drown quickly, and silently, in less than five centimetres (two inches) of water. This summer in Canada, at least one child will drown every two weeks, and there will be a near-drowning each day. More than half of these children are under age five.

- Never leave a child unattended near water.
- Make sure children are supervised by an adult. Ensure that children six years of age and under and children older than seven if they are non swimmers are kept within arm's reach.
- Use lifejackets when children are near water. Backyard pools, hot tubs, and ponds are especially dangerous.
- Be aware that young children can drown in small paddle pools and large buckets.

- Surround pools and hot tubs with a four-foot high, four-sided fence with a childproof gate. Avoid using the back of the house as a part of the fence, as children can still access the pool through the back door.

Vehicles

Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition in which the body's temperature rises far above normal. Every year, young children suffer injuries from being in parked cars that get too hot. Remember that the temperature inside a parked car can exceed 50°C (120°F) within 10-20 minutes on a typical hot summer day. In addition, buckles and straps of car seats can get hot enough to cause a burn on a child's delicate skin.

- Never leave a child (or pets) alone in a vehicle, not even with the windows down or to run a quick errand. It only takes seconds for an accident to happen.
- Do not park your car in direct sunlight. If you cannot avoid it, cover the car seat with a towel or blanket. Car seat covers are available specifically for this purpose as well. It's best to keep babies under one year out of direct sunlight as much as possible.
- Be sure that all passengers leave the vehicle when unloading. Don't overlook sleeping babies.
- Children can set a vehicle in motion. Always lock your car and ensure children do not have access to keys or remote entry devices. Keys should never be left within reach or sight of children.
- If a child gets locked inside, call 911 and get him/her out as soon as possible.
- Keep vehicles locked at all times, even in the garage or driveway.
- If you see a child or animal unattended in a car, be proactive and call 911.

For additional tips, visit Safe Start, BC Children's injury prevention program, at www.bcchildrens.ca/safestart. For more information about water safety, visit the Canadian Red Cross at www.redcross.ca.

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Note to Editor:

- Dr. Ran Goldman, Medical Director, Emergency, BC Children's Hospital is available for interviews July 6-10.
- Alyson McKendrick, Coordinator, Safe Start, BC Children's Hospital is available for interviews July 6-9.

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