

8 BACKYARD HAZARDS How to Keep Kids Safe

PARENTING

JUNE/JULY 1998

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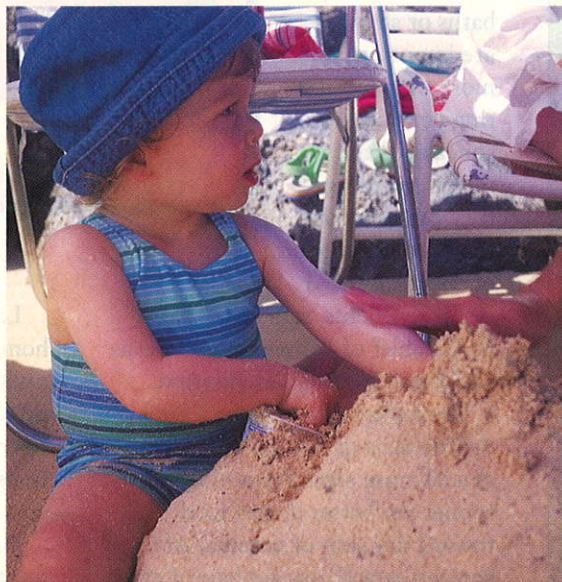
Outsmarting Sneaky Rays

This summer expect to hear a lot about ultraviolet A (UVA) radiation, the similarly evil twin of the sun's ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation. UVA doesn't typically cause visible skin damage—a tan or a sunburn—but it may be as harmful in the long run. UVA rays have been linked to premature aging of the skin and mutations that result in skin cancers, such as melanoma, says Sheldon Pinnell, M.D., professor of dermatology at Duke University Medical Center, in Durham, NC.

To protect your child from both short- and long-term skin damage due to sun exposure:

LOOK BEYOND SPF NUMBERS

The Sun Protection Factor (SPF) index measures only UVB protection, so until the FDA comes up with an alternative scale for UVA (which might not happen for several years), your best weapons against this type of radiation are products



Sun protection: The right letters to know about

touting UVA/UVB, or “broad spectrum,” protection. Look for ingredients that block both, such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, or the UVA shield avobenzone (brand-name Parsol 1789).

APPLY, REAPPLY, THEN APPLY AGAIN Most sunscreen chemicals

require between 20 and 30 minutes to bond effectively with dry skin, which means they need to go on before kids go outside.

Even “water resistant” and “all day” sunscreens should be reapplied every two to three hours—more often when kids perspire heavily, swim, play roughly, or towel-off after a dip. In fact, the FDA now discourages manufacturers from using the term “waterproof,” says agency spokesperson Ivy Kupec, “because consumers feel they’re fully protected.”

DON'T RELY SOLELY ON SUNSCREENS

For added protection, try to keep kids in the shade between 11 A.M. and 3 P.M., when UVB rays are strongest. Hats and other protective clothing are also good sun shields—particularly important for babies under 6 months old, whose skin is too sensitive for sunscreen.

—MARY LISA GAVENAS

HEALTHY TRAVELS

These days family vacations aren't just a visit to the grandparents or a nearby resort. The number of children accompanying Mom and Dad overseas has increased by 60 percent since 1990, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce Tourism Industries Office.

If an exotic trip is on the agenda for your family, you may want to visit or call a travel medicine clinic at least four to six weeks before

you leave for information about immunizations that are recommended or required for specific trips—an African safari, say, or a trek through eastern Asia. “The specialists at these clinics keep on top of the ever-changing vaccine and disease news,” says Bradley Connor, M.D., of the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM).

You can also visit travel medicine clinics, located throughout the

world, if you or your child need help while abroad.

A visit with a staff doctor costs \$60; sometimes the rate is discounted for families and large groups. For a directory of the 500 ISTM facilities, write to: Imodium A-D, Drawer D, 33rd Floor, 1675 Broadway, New York, NY, 10019. Check out ISTM's Web site at www.istm.org for facilities and travel advice. —MARCY MASON