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Your Backyard Safety Guide

Follow these tips from pediatrician Sarah Denny, M.D., to keep your family safe while having fun outside.

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Mow Solo

Keeping your lawn neat and your grass cut is a great way to keep bugs from setting up camp where your kids play. Just be sure to keep children inside while you're mowing — and never allow them to ride — or even pretend to ride — a sit-down mower. Kids can get seriously injured if they fall off (it's more common than you think) or get hit by rocks or other projectiles if they're out in the yard.

Watch Out for Poisonous Plants

No matter how manicured your backyard, there is always potential for poisonous plants to creep into your landscaping. Poison ivy can grow as either a bush or a vine, and the vines like to grow on fences, stone walls, and trees. While you may be tempted to follow the old rule, "leaves of three, let it be," it's better to remove the vines if you can. And if you notice any natural berries growing in your yard, research them and remove the plant they grow on, if necessary.

Maintain the Sandbox

A sandbox can provide creative and sensory fun, but if not properly cared for, it can be another source of injury and infection. Denny says sandboxes should be inspected for rough edges, splinters, and protruding objects before use. The filling should be natural river or beach sand and nothing that contains limestone, marble, or quartz. Be sure to securely cover the box when it's not in use, as animals may find their way into the sand and use it as a litter box. To avoid bacterial or fungal growth, allow the sand to dry out as much as possible before covering.

Stock Up on SPF

It's nearly impossible to go overboard with sun protection. Be sure to lather kids up with at least SPF 30 every two hours (more frequently if they're playing in the water), and opt for a lotion over a spray. It's easier to make sure you have thorough coverage.

Be Cautious About the Pool

If you have an inground or aboveground pool, it should be surrounded by a 4-sided fence with a self-locking gate. And if you have a baby pool in your yard, be sure to empty it and turn it upside down when the kids are done for the day. Make it rule: No one goes anywhere near the water until a grown-up is present!

We've got loads more ways to have family fun right outside your door! Just visit scholastic.com/fuelbackyardfun

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