Keep Kids Healthy and Safe this Summer

(StatePoint) It’s summer, and for kids that means it’s time for sports, swimming, biking and picnics. And while active outdoor time is healthy and fun, experts say it’s crucial for parents and kids to brush up on some seasonal safety tips.

According to the experts at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the summer poses its own set of risks. In order to help parents keep kids happy, healthy and safe all summer long, they are offering these timely tips:

**Sun Safety**

Sunburns are not only unpleasant, they are damaging to skin health. Minimize your family’s exposure to harmful ultraviolet radiation by dressing your children (and yourself for that matter) in cotton clothing with a tight weave, sunglasses and hats with a brim or bill.

Stay in the shade whenever possible and use a sunscreen with an SPF 15 or greater, even on cloudy days, and reapply it every two hours, or after swimming or sweating. Always keep plenty of water on hand when you’re playing or exercising outside. Unless kids are exercising vigorously for extended periods, plain water—not sports drinks—is the best way to rehydrate.

**Water Safety**

Drowning is a leading cause of death among children, including infants and toddlers, but parents can make swimming safer for kids with the right safety equipment, instruction and supervision.

“While swimming lessons are helpful, they are not a foolproof plan. Parents should never -- even for a moment -- leave children alone near open bodies of water,” says Dr. Thomas K. McInerny, the 2013 president of the AAP.

Home swimming pools should be surrounded by a four-foot-high, non-climbable, four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate. Parents, caregivers, and pool owners should learn CPR and keep equipment approved by the U.S. Coast Guard, such as life preservers and life jackets at poolside.

**Trampolines**

Even with netting, padding and adult supervision, experts say that home trampolines are dangerous.

“Trampoline injuries are common, and can be potentially catastrophic,” says Dr. McInerny. “From temporarily debilitating sprains, strains and contusions to cervical spine injuries with lasting consequences, the risks associated with recreational trampoline use are easily avoided.”

Thousands of people are injured on trampolines annually. Encourage your child to get exercise in safer ways.

**Bike Safety**

Children should wear a helmet on every bike ride. Accidents can happen anywhere, anytime. Get your child a helmet specific for biking. Football helmets, for example, are made to protect the head from other types of injuries.

Teach your children traffic and bike safety before allowing them to bike in the street. For example, they should always ride with traffic and use hand signals. If your child doesn’t have the skills necessary to use hand signals without swerving, he or she shouldn’t be riding in the street.

For more summer safety tips, visit the AAP’s website for parents, www.HealthyChildren.org.

By taking proper precautions, you can maximize the fun this summer by keeping kids healthy, safe and sound.