

Your Health

by Dr. Paul Roumeliotis

Summer Safety

Summer is approaching and this means barbecues, camping as well as riding and working outdoors. I want to discuss some things you can do to protect you and your family from some of the associated dangers, so that you can all enjoy the summer safely!

Barbeque safety

- When barbecuing, make sure that your young child is far enough away from the broiler in order to prevent a burn injury. Also, keep all barbecue accessories including charcoal, lighter fluid and propane gas tanks well out of the reach of children at all times.
- To prevent foodborne illness or “food poisoning”, it is important to cook food to the right internal temperature. Using a cooking thermometer will allow you to cook meat properly and avoid overcooking it too. Different foods have differing internal target temperatures. The food needs to be cooked until the target internal temperature is reached, and then for at least another 15 seconds. For whole poultry the internal target temperature is 82°C (180°F). For cut or ground poultry the internal target temperature is 74°C (165°F). For beef, pork, lamb or veal (ground or steaks or roasts) it is 71°C (160°F). Finally the ideal internal temperature for fish is 70°C (158°F).

Camping safety

- When camping, pitch your tent in a safe appropriate area, not on a hillside or too close to a lake or water.
- If you are building a campfire, make sure it is well away from your tent, and pour water on it to make sure it is out before going to sleep.
- It is a good idea to bring a first aid kit when you go camping with your family. The kit should include medicated (antibiotic) ointment, antihistamine syrup, calamine lotion, fever/pain medicine (acetaminophen), insect repellent, bandages and of course sun screen.

Riding safety (*Bicycles, skateboards, in-line skating and scooters*)

- When riding any vehicle on wheels, riders should not wear headphones attached to portable radios, tape or CD or MP3 players. The music can prevent them from hearing noises around them while riding, and can potentially lead to a fatal accident.
- While riding a bike, government approved and well fitted bicycle helmets must always be worn.
- Helmets designed for skateboarding can protect a skateboarder from serious injury, but only if worn during skateboarding. If you or your child skateboards, roller blades or rides a scooter always wear a helmet.
- A 1991 study showed that 95% of injured skateboarders were younger than 25 years old and 61% were between 5-14 years old. Clearly the message is to try to teach children to skateboard safely with proper protective equipment. The same applies to in-line skating and scooter riding.

Other safety tips

- During the summer months, parents are busy gardening, cutting the grass and trimming trees and bushes. Make sure that all the tools you use are always stored in an area that is out of the reach of children.
- Be extra careful when driving during the summer, especially around parks and neighborhoods with lots of children.
- If you have small children and a summer or vacation cottage make sure that the cottage is fully “baby-safe”.

Dr. Paul Roumeliotis is the Medical Officer of Health for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, McGill University. © Dr. Paul Roumeliotis