

Ask Nurse Rona: Safe Fun in the Sun this Summer

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Q: *My daughter always tests the limits when I try to make her wear her sun hat or stay still for sunscreen. When I was young we never had to worry about these things, how important are they?*

A: Summer is here, so it's okay to be more flexible and stretch some of the rules — but parents do need to keep safety precautions in mind and set clear limits. And staying protected from the sun is a top recommendation. Stay calm when you tell her that it's the rule, and the only choice might be that she can help you rub the sunscreen in. When you're clear, setting limits is easier.

- All children older than six months should be well-lotioned up with sunscreen. There are great products made just for kids, which come in easy-to-apply sticks or sprays. Look for a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, and check with your pediatrician for their guidelines regarding sunscreen on infants (there are varied opinions on that).
- When applying sunscreen, spread it on thick and don't forget the ears, nose, back of the neck, shoulders, and behind the legs. It's suggested that you apply more sunscreen every two hours, or every time your child gets wet or dried off.
- If your daughter won't wear the hat you bought, let her pick one out the next time you go to the store. If she is sensitive and just can't wear it, keep her head cooled off with water or shade.
- Hot, sunny days carry a risk of dehydration, so make sure your kids drink a lot of fluids. Offer water even if they aren't thirsty. If you offer juice, dilute it. Many pediatricians suggest that young children drink no more than 4 to 6 ounces of juice a day from a cup, not a bottle.
- Summer is the time when lots of parents haul out small wading pools. Never leave your young kids alone near a pool (even a tiny pool), in the tub, or playing with a bucket of water. Even older children who are good swimmers should have a swimming buddy. Accidents happen fast.
- When you're at a party with lots of people, or at the museum with family members, make sure you know who is watching your child. Say out loud, "I'm on duty," so the other person knows they can shift their attention and you know you have full responsibility. It's often when lots of adults are around that kids get into things that are potentially dangerous.

Have fun with your kids this summer — and be safe. Giving them an opportunity to be outside, and to enjoy the freedom to run around and play also gives them a foundation for a healthy life. Feed them fresh fruits and veggies for snacks, and enjoy the time you have together.