

The summertime has brought glorious sunshine and lots of fine dry weather. With fine weather we have more opportunity for barbeques, trips to the seaside, lochs, or parks, children playing in the garden at home and generally being outdoors more.

Whilst the weather has been glorious, it also brings additional risks to children's safety.

The Burns Unit at the Royal Hospital for Children have highlighted sunburn, children playing near barbeques, children picking up hot stones or coals, or standing on them, and children stepping on the hot ground where a barbecue has been used. To date, a number of children have been badly burned this summer. The unit have reported an increase in the numbers of children attending their clinics as a direct result of painful sunburn and burns associated with barbeques.

Sunburn

Sunburn is harmful to the skin and often when out in the sunshine, particularly if it is windy or the skin is cooled by going in and out of water, children and adults won't be aware of sunburn until the skin becomes red. Mild sunburn can include the skin becoming red, warm, sore and itchy. Usually mild sunburn doesn't result in a trip to hospital; however increased exposure to UV rays can result in more severe sunburn involving the skin blistering, a high temperature or fever, dehydration and heat exhaustion. Sunburn is always painful and uncomfortable for children. Children or adults burned by the sun have an increased risk of skin cancer later in life.

Barbeques

Portable barbeques are often used on the ground in the garden at home, in parks and in a variety of public areas. This has resulted in children standing on the very hot ground where a barbecue has previously been placed for cooking. Children playing barefoot and unaware that a barbecue has been on the ground, can suffer from painful or serious burns to their feet.

Children picking up hot coals, that they've thought were cold, sometimes with both hands, and instead of a fun day at the beach, it ends in pain and suffering, a visit to A & E and for some, years of ongoing treatment. Picking up and handling hot coals or stones can result in painful or serious burns as children will be unaware of the heat when they will simply see stones for skimming on water, or playing and having fun with.

Safety tips for parents/carers:

1. Babies and infants should not be exposed to direct sunlight. A parasol or sun shade should always be used if they are in a pram or buggy and always kept in the shade. Parents need to be alert to the sun and shade moving over the course of a day. A pram or buggy should never be covered with a blanket, towel or a plastic rain cover in the sun, as this can cause the temperature to rise dramatically below the cover while the child is in their pram or buggy.
2. Older children should wear a hat, T-shirt or protective clothes, have sun cream liberally applied before going out in the sun and reapplied regularly whilst in the sun. Parents should always be encouraged to follow the manufacturer's instructions for applying sun cream.
If children or adults are swimming, or are in and out of water, sun cream should be reapplied after swimming or drying off. Children and adults should keep out of direct sun when it is strongest usually from 11am to 3pm.
3. Children should always be kept away from barbeques when they are being used, afterwards when cooking is complete and when the barbeque is left to cool. A barbeque and its coals will remain hot for a long period of time after use. Coals should never be left on the ground after use; they should be cooled with water, if possible, and always disposed of safely. The ground, or area, that the barbeque has been sitting on will also remain hot. Often portable barbeques are used directly on the ground. If possible the area should be cooled with water and children always kept well away from the area until it has cooled. Adults should always ensure barbeques are cool before moving them and always safely discard portable barbeques after use.

Further information is available to read here:

1. ***Skin cancer prevention:*** Public health guideline [PH32] Published date: January 2011 Last updated: February 2016
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph32>
2. ***Sunlight exposure: risks and benefits***
NICE guideline [NG34] Published date: February 2016
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng34>
3. **The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents:**
<https://www.rospa.com/>
4. ***Barbeque safety: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.***
<http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/barbecue-safety.aspx>