



News Release

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A Wet, Wild, and Worry-free Summer

UDOH urges Utahns to be safe this holiday weekend

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Tragedies can happen in a blink of an eye. Over the past five years, an average of ten Utah children under 18 drowned and another 82 were admitted to the hospital or treated in an emergency room due to a near-drowning incident each year. As families gather this Pioneer Day weekend, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) reminds Utahns to have fun but be safe around the water and in the sun.

“Water is dangerous at any depth,” said Christi Fisher, Director of Safe Kids Utah and a health educator with the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “It takes just seconds for a child to drown. Parents should never be more than an arm’s length away from their child when they are around water.”

Drowning is one of the leading causes of injury-related death for children under 18 in Utah. The two most common drowning scenarios are that of an under-supervised young child wandering off during a family gathering and falling into a body of water (like a pool, stream, pond, or irrigation ditch) and a teen male swimming with friends at a reservoir or lake.

“A child can drown in as little as one inch of water and drowning is usually quick and silent. A child may lose consciousness after just one to three minutes and may have irreversible brain damage in as little as four to six minutes after submersion,” said Dr. Charles Pruitt, an Emergency Medicine physician at Primary Children's Medical Center. “Never take your eyes off your children when they're around water and remember, don't just be there, be aware.”

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Though more subtle, the sun can be equally dangerous for children. Just a few serious sunburns can increase a child's risk of skin cancer later in life. Utah is one of the top 10 states for melanoma deaths in the nation. Approximately 60 Utahns die every year from this preventable cancer. Applying sunblock is a quick and easy way for parents to protect kids.

“I want my kids to enjoy being outside, but I also want them to be safe, too,” said Becky Jensen, a Salt Lake City mother of two young children. “Sunblock is a must in our home – we put it on before we go outside to spend time in the sun. It takes only a couple of minutes to put on and it makes a big difference now and in the future.”

The UDOH urges parents to follow these eight tips to keep their kids safe:

- Actively supervise children who are playing in or near water.
- Where there’s water, designate an adult “child watcher” during parties and family gatherings.
- Warn teenagers of the risks of overestimating how well they swim.
- Everyone should wear a life jacket while on a boat or during water sports. Children should also wear a life jacket when near open bodies of water.
- Cover up. The best way to prevent skin cancer is to keep skin out of the sun. Wear long sleeves or pants, hats, and sunglasses to protect kids from the sun’s harmful rays.
- Choose a sunblock with a minimum SPF 15 or higher with both UVA and UVB protection.
- Apply sunblock 30-45 minutes *before* going outside.
- Reapply sunblock every 2 to 2.5 hours. If your child gets wet, reapply sunblock as soon as they get out of the water, even if the label says it’s “waterproof.”

To learn more about water safety and skin cancer prevention visit

<http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/> or <http://www.ucan.cc/>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.