



8 Simple Rules for Summer Safety ~ Revved Up Mom

Summer means more freedom for children, less structure in the schedule, and often less supervision. Here are a few simple tips to keep your kids safer during their summer break:

1. Parent/guardian must always know where you are. Young children should always be under the direct supervision of a trusted adult. All children should be instructed never to enter anyone's home, back yard or basement without your permission. Older children should be required to check in periodically. Kids travel in packs; make a rule that your children must let you know every time they relocate. If your child doesn't have a cell phone, walkie talkies work well in a neighborhood setting.

2. Check the safety policies of all organizations who care for your children. Summer camps, day camps, swim centers, gyms, etc. should all have strong written child safety policies and they should be able to provide the policy to you easily. If your child is participating in activities at an organization who can't produce a child safety policy on request, you should think twice about whether or not you want them caring for your child. Predators will always gravitate to the organizations that make it easy for them. Strong child safety policies include a "no one-on-one" rule, meaning that no adult is ever allowed to be alone with a child under any circumstances.

3. Have a plan if you get separated. Whenever you go on an outing, even to the store, you should make a plan with your child in case you get separated. The plan should be to meet at a place that your child can easily locate from anywhere in the venue. A child with a plan is less likely to look lost and vulnerable; a child who is wandering around crying for mommy is an easy target for an opportunist. Remind your child that you would NEVER leave the venue without him or her (sometimes an opportunist predator will say "I just saw your mommy go out of the store and she was looking for you, I can take you to her."). Look for the [Code Adam insignia](#) at retail and entertainment venues, this indicates a structured protocol for responding when a child is lost. It is typically displayed at the venue entrance.

4. Take a photo at the beginning of the day. If you go on an outing, it's a good idea to take a head-to-toe photo of your children at the beginning of the day. If you get separated, you will be in a panic and it will be hard for you to give an accurate description, especially of clothing. Having a photo is a simple way to provide detailed information to staff and volunteers who might be helping in a search.

5. Set good safety rules at hotels and resorts. It's easy for complacency to set in on vacation. If you are staying at a resort or hotel, set strong boundaries for your children. Do not let young children out of your sight, and make sure older children follow Rule #1 above. Check the safety policies of any childcare setting at the resort.

6. Privates are private. It's easy for us to assume that our children will remember this simple rule, but if we don't reinforce it often, they may forget. Make this a regular statement in your home. "Privates are private, no one is allowed to see or touch my privates; if anyone tries, I need to tell my trusted adult."

7. Know the parents of your teen's friends. Teens love the freedom that summer brings, and this is a time when they have more opportunity to get into trouble. It is wise to keep track of the kids in your child's circle, and be in touch with their parents. Teens will test boundaries, and if you are cross-checking them continually, they'll know that the boundaries are firm. Is your child telling you that he's spending the night at someone's home? Or that no one else has a curfew? Check with the other parents. As soon as you become less vigilant, you can find yourself on a slippery slope.

8. Trust your instincts. If your child is resistant to spending time at a particular place or with a particular person, this should set off your alarm bells *even if the person is a close friend or relative*. More than 90% of the time a predator knows his victim. It's an unfortunate fact that most children are sexually abused by people they know and trust. Equally unfortunate is the fact that most victims won't tell. If you suspect abuse, or if your child discloses abuse, contact 1-800-CHILDREN for advice.

Have a safe and happy summer! For more tips and advice about child safety, visit revvedupkids.org.