

# ADHD & SUMMER SAFETY

## and What Dangers Can Be Presented

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As summer arrives, children are provided with more freedom and decreased structure. With this comes exploration, experiential learning and enjoyment. It can also, however, lead to accidents and injuries. Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder can be easily distracted, have difficulty paying attention, and may struggle to respond to directions. This can lead to cuts and scrapes, head injuries, or other more serious accidents when they are playing. Research indicates that children with ADHD are significantly more likely to: become injured; fall while riding a bicycle; suffer head injuries; and be hospitalized for accidental poisoning.

Some preventative measure to put in place include: supervision during activities; implementing water safety precautions and techniques; and always make sure your children are wearing a helmet while riding a bike, rollerblading or skateboarding.

Children with ADHD also have a higher likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors, which can include playing with fire and fireworks. Therefore, it is important to ensure that your children do not have access to fireworks and that fireworks are only handled by responsible adults.

For a child with ADHD, having "free play time" can have considerable benefits. Creating a safe playground in your backyard with games, activities, and the opportunity to run around can provide your child with a safe and enjoyable environment. Fenced in areas, local parks, or children's fitness centers often provide safe areas for your child to play, tumble, run, hop, jump, explore, throw, catch, etc. John Taylor, Ph.D., of [additudemag.com](http://additudemag.com), wrote that studies have revealed, "that kids with ADHD who spend time outdoors in a green setting – a tree-lined

street, park, or grassy backyard – feel calmer and more focused than those who spend hours at the computer or on an asphalt playground." Despite setting up "free play time" for your child, it will still be important to incorporate some structure into the event to help improve safety and enjoyment. Therefore, it can be beneficial to:

- Review the rules prior to engaging in the activity. When going over the rules, remember to tell your child what to do (i.e. play nicely with your friends) as opposed to what not to do (i.e. do not hit). In addition, providing reminders while they play can help improve sustained compliance.
- Incorporate praise and/or reinforcers for positive behavior.
- Review potential consequences prior to the activity. It will be important to be fair, firm, and consistent with your child. Also, do not be afraid to utilize time-outs or other appropriate consequences when in public.
- Plan for transitions. This can include giving your child count-downs (10 minutes left, 5 minutes left, 1 minute left) to help them prepare for changing activities or leaving.

### Expect and plan for success, which can include:

- Anticipating potential difficulties.
- Bringing snacks.
- Going during peak times when your child is well rested and most attentive.
- Not scheduling the activities for too long.
- Monitoring your child for signs of fatigue or mounting frustration.
- Leaving before your child gets too tired.

Despite all of the safety precautions that you take, ensuring that you provide adequate supervision, especially with a child that has ADHD and who may be more accident prone, will be paramount to decreasing the frequency and severity of your child's injuries. This will hopefully lead to enjoyable, educational, and safe activities for you and your child all summer long.

*Resource: Let the Games Begin: Treating ADHD with Summer Fun by John Taylor, Ph.D. of [ADDitude.com](http://ADDitude.com)*

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