

# Holiday Safety

Holidays are a time when children and families can look forward to relaxing and spending time together without the usual distractions of work, school and day-to-day routines. However, the absence of a familiar home environment, along with new activities and toys, can sometimes result in injuries. Here are our suggestions for ensuring a safe holiday.

## Travelling by car

If travelling by car, make sure that child car restraints are appropriate for your child's size and are correctly fitted. If the drive is a long one, stop at regular intervals to give the children a break and allow them to stretch their legs.

- Children get bored easily and can distract the driver; have age-appropriate toys or books that can occupy young minds, together with snacks and drinks.
- Dress the children in comfortable, loose-fitting clothes. It is sensible to plan driving during the cooler times of the day.
- **Never leave children or pets alone in the car.** The temperature inside a car on even a cool day can rise to dangerous levels very quickly.

## In the bush

Wear sensible clothes when walking in the bush – sturdy shoes and adequate clothing should be worn to protect against a snake or insect bite, and to protect against sudden changes in weather. Non-baggy clothing is safer around campfires and barbecues, and remember that campfires left to burn out overnight often contain enough heat the following morning to cause severe burns to bare feet.

## When heading out for a walk:

- Check weather forecasts for fire danger days
- Tell someone when and where you are going
- Carry sufficient water and often stop for rest breaks and snacks. Remember young children have limited capacity for long walks, especially if the terrain is hilly and challenging. A rough guide for maximum walking distances for children is one kilometre for every year of their age.
- Take care swimming in rivers or waterholes. Check the depth of the water and look out for submerged branches and other hidden obstacles.
- Make sure you have sufficient sun protection – hats, sunscreen and appropriate clothes. Sunburn can occur even in the dappled and filtered light of the bush.
- Stick to established trails and keep clear of cliffs.

## At the beach

**Never take your eyes off children in, on or around water.** Supervision means constant visual contact, not the occasional glance. You should actively supervise children even if they can swim.

- Beaches patrolled by lifesavers are the safest for your child to swim at. Teach them to swim between the red and yellow flags, which indicate the beach is patrolled by lifesavers.
- Teach children the potential risks of big waves and a powerful undertow.
- Be careful around rocks. There is a danger of being marooned by the incoming tide or being swept away by a big wave.
- Encourage children to wear sandals or thongs to avoid cuts and injuries from glass, rocks or syringes. The sand can also be burning hot for young feet on days when the sun is shining.
- Provide protection from the sun with hats, sunscreens and swimsuits or loose-fitting clothes that cover the body.
- Teach children to leave sea creatures alone because of the risk of stings or bites.

## How do you spot a rip current?

Sometimes it's easier to look at the waves are breaking consistently, and then look to each side where they don't break consistently. That's the rip current.

The key signs to look for are:

- Deeper darker water
- Fewer breaking waves
- Sometimes sandy coloured water extending beyond the surf zone
- Debris or seaweed

## Teach your school-age children what to do if they are caught in a rip

- For assistance, stay calm, float and raise an arm to attract attention.
- While floating, rip currents may flow in a circular pattern and return you to an adjacent sandbar.
- You may escape the rip current by swimming parallel to the beach, towards the breaking waves.
- You should regularly assess your situation. If your response is ineffective, you may need to adopt an alternative (eg staying calm, floating and raising an arm to attract attention).

## Travelling overseas

Ensure all vaccinations for the family are up to date for the country you are planning to visit. For the latest vaccine information visit [travelvaccines.com.au](http://www.travelvaccines.com.au) (<http://www.travelvaccines.com.au/>). Even if young children are not travelling, it is important you are vaccinated, as you could put children at risk when you return if you have been exposed to a virus or illness overseas.

- Check travel warnings for the country you are visiting on the Smart Traveller website [smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) (<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>)
- Make spare copies of your passports and emergency numbers
- Take out travel insurance.

## New toys and equipment

Holidays are a peak time for injuries from bikes and skateboards, or injuries from new toys. For more information read our fact sheet on [play safety](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Backyard_and_Playground_Safety/) ([www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Backyard\\_and\\_Playground\\_Safety/](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Backyard_and_Playground_Safety/)).

- Make sure children learn how to use new equipment – bikes, skateboards, scooters, in-line skates, trampolines and play equipment. Supervise children until they are confident and capable; even then, it is a good idea to set limits.
- Insist children wear appropriate safety equipment – helmets, reflective gear and light-coloured clothing when cycling; helmets, wrist guards, knee- and elbow-pads when skating – and include these in the gift for the child.
- Trampolines are not recommended for children under six years of age as they are more prone to serious injuries.
- Avoid 'projectile' toys that shoot out missiles – these can cause serious injuries to eyes and other parts of the body.

## Key points to remember

- During holidays, remember that the absence of the familiar home environment, along with new activities and toys, can sometimes result in injuries.
- When going away, prepare for a range of weather conditions and always actively supervise children in new environments, especially around water.
- Choose play equipment that meets the Australian Standards and toys that are age appropriate to avoid possible hazards or injuries.

## More information

- Kids Health Info fact sheet – [Water safety](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Water_Safety/) ([www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Water\\_Safety/](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Water_Safety/)), [Pool safety](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Pool_safety/) ([www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Pool\\_safety/](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Pool_safety/))
- Life Saving Victoria – [Watch around water](http://lsv.com.au/pool-safety-services/watch-around-water/) (<http://lsv.com.au/pool-safety-services/watch-around-water/>)
- For information on bites from venomous creatures, including snakes, go to The Australian Venom Research Unit at the University of Melbourne, [www.avru.org.au](http://www.avru.org.au) (<http://www.avru.org.au/>)
- Consumer Affairs Victoria and ACCC at [www.productsafety.gov.au](http://www.productsafety.gov.au) (<http://www.productsafety.gov.au/>) or [www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au) (<http://www.recalls.gov.au/>)

# Kids Health Info app

The app will enable you to search and browse more than three hundred medical fact sheets and work offline.



## Disclaimer

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