

## Summertime Fun for Your Practice

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Summertime is here, and we need to think about our family practice. What kind of activities can you participate in during this season? What common pediatric spinal injuries can you expect this time of year? What safety tips can you pass on to parents to keep their children safe?

### Community Involvement

Check out your local summer programs in your community and see how your office may be able to participate, not only by volunteering your time, but by having an opportunity to educate families. Start with contacting your chamber of commerce, local paper, the YMCA, museums, "concerts in the park" or city zoo, to request a calendar of events for families or weeklong camps for kids.

For example, consider contacting a weeklong camp and volunteer your office's help. Your office could also offer to sponsor a snack break, or consider teaching a class on safety; posture and spine care; healthy life-style; or another topic on which you can speak with authority.

Offer to present a craft class to an organization like the local Boys and Girls Clubs. Work with your staff to come up with a craft theme: for example, it could be related to the spine, bones and nerves, or posture. Purchase the supplies and have fun with the children.

Promote safety issues. Host a child CPR class at your office. Contact the Red Cross and obtain an instructor for the class; invite your patients to attend for little or no cost; and announce the class in community public service announcements via the newspaper, flyers in small stores, or radio.

Contact amusement parks (water slides are a must) and offer to present a safety class for their employees and how to keep children safe during their visits.

Present your patients a newsletter or handout in your office, "Important Summer Safety Tips for Your Children." Give helpful ideas to prevent spinal injuries. For example, from water slides, flexion and extension injuries to the cervical and lumbar spine can result, while going down a slide, or because of the way children hit the water. (Just one simple tip on sliding: it's safer to go down on your back than on your stomach.)

Amusement park rides may be fun, but what about the whipping back and forth of the spine? Inform parents that if each child can hold one hand behind the neck, while the other hand grasps the railing during the ride, it will reduce potential whiplash action.

Instruct parents about the dangers when diving into a pool. Children should never dive into the shallow end, and should be careful about the diving board. Running around the pool can often lead to falls on the concrete, and children should wear water footwear that decreases the possibility of slips and falls.

Trampolines. The number of spinal injuries from large trampolines in backyards is great. There is no right way to be safe on this equipment! The risks outweigh the fun, and parents should be asked to get rid of this hazard before a serious injury occurs.

Start moving. Recommend to parents that they start an exercise program with their children. Some children are more sedentary, and with longer daylight time in the summer, parents can start walking or bicycling with their children when they get home from work.

Dieting. Ask parents to participate in a one-week family food journal of their diets. Review the journals and encourage parents to take this summer to set themselves back on track. Recheck them in a month and help them to keep modifying their eating lifestyle.

With the increase of obesity, children and parents need to be encouraged to exercise and improve their diets.

Re-evaluate your child patient. Due to busy schedules during the school year, often parents don't allow for the extra time to update the child's records with an evaluation. Take the next few months and make it a priority with your staff to make sure each child has an updated spinal evaluation.

Summer Hires. And finally, think about-school teens considering chiropractic as a career. Hire them for summer or part-time jobs and give them an opportunity to see how your practice is all about serving others.

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