

## Staying healthy during the summer: A guide for parents

Dear Parent,

The temperatures have been rising steadily and the days are getting longer. It's summertime once again! While the summer usually means children craving ice-cream every day, it can also mean the onset of summer-specific diseases such as diarrhoea, dehydration, conjunctivitis, fevers and mosquito-borne diseases. Here are some tips to help make this your child's best summer and the healthiest one you have had in a while!

Please go through this letter and call us, or write to us, in case there are any further questions or if you require further information. You can call 6130-3535 and ask to speak to me or any of the other physicians, or reach Shivani Dawlatjada at [shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in](mailto:shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in).

### 1. Protect your children from the sun

- Stay in the shade! Stay inside, or at least in the shade, during the middle of the day from 10 am to 4 pm, as that is when UV rays are most harmful.
- Use sunscreen, ideally all year long! UV rays are harmful in all seasons and especially in Mumbai's tropical weather. Even if it is cloudy, 30 minutes before going out in the sun, we recommend that you apply sunscreen with a SPF of at least 15. Reapply it every 3-4 hours.
- Cover up with clothing to protect exposed skin. A long-sleeved shirt made of thin cotton and long pants with a tight weave are best. Wear a cap with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck and sunglasses to protect the eyes.

### 2. Drink enough fluids

- In the summer, the body loses more water so your children need to drink enough water.
- Do not give your children carbonated drinks as they make one even thirstier. The healthy choices are coconut water, lemonade (without sugar, or with just a little sugar) and homemade fresh fruit juices.

### 3. Prevent food poisoning with these food safety tips

- Wash your hands thoroughly before preparing and serving your child's food.
- Cook foods thoroughly before you feed them to your children, especially meat, poultry and eggs.
- Separate foods and utensils when you are preparing, serving, and storing your child's meals, so that they don't become cross-contaminated with germs from each other. Also clean utensils and surfaces with hot water and soap.

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- Chill leftover food as soon as possible and within a few hours of cooking or serving.
- Wash and clean all fruits and vegetables before serving them to your child, especially if you are serving raw vegetables.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk (raw milk).
- Throw out foods that you think are contaminated or are past their expiration date, even if they aren't mouldy and don't have an odour, since you can't always tell when a food is contaminated.
- Never let raw meat, cooked food, or cut fresh fruits or vegetables sit at room temperature for more than 30 minutes before putting them in the refrigerator.

**4. If despite these precautions, your child gets food poisoning, follow the treatment laid out below**

- Food poisoning treatment is usually aimed at preventing dehydration. Antibiotics are usually unnecessary for most cases of food poisoning, although for some severe infections, they may be required.
- See your paediatrician or come to a Healthspring centre if you think that your child has food poisoning, especially if he/she has bloody diarrhoea, high fever, signs of dehydration, or if he/she isn't quickly getting better.

**5. Seasonal allergies are common during the summer, but these are easily managed**

- An allergy to pollen can turn an innocent summer outing into an itching, tearing, nose-running affair. Plan your outdoor activities on cooler, humid days, or after a cleansing rain as pollen counts tend to be lower then.
- Use nasal saline drops for stuffy noses.
- Antihistamines could be used if the nasal saline drop does not make your child feel better.

**6. Swimming is a good way to stay cool during the summer, but keep your child safe during this activity**

- Ensure that your child showers before swimming, and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take children out of the pool for bathroom breaks and check diapers often.
- Never leave a young child unattended near water and maintain constant supervision when child is swimming.

**7. Protect your family from getting mosquito bites**

- Mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk. If you live near areas of stagnant water, consider staying indoors at those times of day.
- Apply mosquito repellent.
- Make your child change into long sleeves and pants when you notice the first mosquito.

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### 8. Seasonal Flu

- Make sure that your child washes his/her hands thoroughly and regularly.
- Encourage your child to eat nutritious food that will strengthen his/her immunity.
- Give your child a lot of fluids.
- Avoid sick people as germs can easily be spread.

### 9. Vaccinate

- Protect yourself and your child against chickenpox, typhoid, hepatitis and the flu by taking the vaccines for these diseases.
- Some of these require only one injection, but others (such as typhoid require boosters) – check your child’s medical record and speak to your paediatrician or a Healthspring physician about which vaccines you may need.

We hope this gives you a better sense of how to keep your family health this summer; please do feel free to reach out to us if you have any more questions.

Dr. Khullar  
Paediatrician, Healthspring

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