



News Release

American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery

Working for the Best Ear, Nose, and Throat Care

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ENT Doctors Give Tips for Kids' Summer Health

Alexandria, Va. – School is out and happy students are beginning their long-awaited summer break! With summer come many fun activities, including camp, swimming, and family vacations. Unfortunately, many of these activities can also bring summertime headaches for parents as their kids develop earaches, sunburns, and allergies. The American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) would like to offer parents and caregivers some helpful tips for keeping kids safe and healthy this summer season.

“Summer is a great time for playing outdoors, family vacations, and catching up on routine doctor’s appointments for your children,” said Max April, MD, professor of Clinical Otorhinolaryngology, Weill Cornell Medical Center and chair of the AAO-HNS Pediatric Otolaryngology Committee. “Parents can help ensure their kids have a safe and happy summer by being aware of some common and preventable health worries.”

Dr. April points out the following summertime ear, nose, and throat health issues that parents should be aware of:

1. **Summer Allergies** – Summertime allergies can affect children very differently than adults, so administering over-the-counter medications before consulting with a physician is not advisable. Simple hay fever can lead to long-term problems in swallowing, sleeping, hearing, and breathing for children, so it is important to have a thorough check-up if your child appears to be suffering from common allergy symptoms like sneezing, itchy eyes, and congested sinuses.
2. **Swimmer’s Ear** - The outer ear tissue is delicate and infection can occur, often in swimmers, when water is trapped in the ear canal. Bathing or showering may also cause this common infection. In kids, the symptoms may include complaints of an earache (can be very painful), pulling on the ear lobe, and complaining of the ear feeling “full” or “blocked.” If caught early, the infection may be treated with ear drops. Acute cases may require antibiotics.
3. **Ears and Altitude** – If you are traveling by plane for a family vacation, children may experience some discomfort from the changing air pressure during the flight. Tell children in advance about this common problem and ask as you take off and land if their ears are bothering them. If they are, have them swallow several times, drink some water, or chew on a piece of sugarless gum to “pop” their ears. Very young children who cannot talk yet can be fed a bottle, as swallowing will help relieve pressure in the ears.
4. **Skin Cancer** – The head and neck are two very common areas for skin cancer to develop due to constant exposure to the sun. Severe childhood sunburns are also a common risk-factor for developing skin cancers later on in life. Protect your child by applying a waterproof SPF 15 or higher sun block every day and limiting the amount of time they are in direct exposure to the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun’s rays are most powerful.
5. **Summer Camp** – Before sending your child off to summer camp, make sure you compile a list of any medications or devices your child needs and send them with an adequate supply, including emergency allergy medications and possibly ear plugs if your child has ear tubes. Be sure to review all health concerns with the camp staff, giving specific instructions for care and providing day and evening contact numbers if your child becomes ill.

6. Tonsillectomy Surgery – Tonsillectomy with or without adenoidectomy is one of the most common operations performed on children, usually for obstructive sleep apnea or recurrent tonsil infections. Summer is an ideal time to schedule a tonsillectomy, which may require a special diet and limited physical activity for up to 2 weeks.

With some advance planning and the ability to recognize early symptoms, children and parents can make the most of this summer vacation.

For more information on children's ear, nose, and throat health, or to find an ENT physician in your area, visit the AAO-HNS website at <http://www.entnet.org>.

About the AAO-HNS

The American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (www.entnet.org), one of the oldest medical associations in the nation, represents more than 12,000 physicians and allied health professionals who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the ears, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The Academy serves its members by facilitating the advancement of the science and art of medicine related to otolaryngology and by representing the specialty in governmental and socioeconomic issues. The organization's mission: "Working for the Best Ear, Nose, and Throat Care."

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