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Tips for a Great S.O.S.: Summer of Safety

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Summer is quickly approaching us. The children will be outside playing more often and the family may even decide to go on a summer vacation. Well, now is the time to plan your S.O.S.—that is, a summer of safety. The core of pediatric medicine is the prevention of illness and injury in children. As a pediatrician, I believe that many of the injuries children encounter during the summer can be prevented through simple awareness and education. The following summer safety tips will focus on water safety, car seat safety, and personal safety.

Summer is the perfect time to take a dip in the pool. However, children should NEVER be left unsupervised near a pool, a bathtub, or any body of water. There are an alarming number of drowning accidents in the Pensacola area every single summer. Most drownings occur when a child wanders into a pool area that is not secure and then slips or falls into the pool when no adults are present. How do we prevent this? First of all, every home pool should have a fence surrounding it with a locked gate. It should be impossible for a child to climb under or over the fence to enter the pool area. Next, there should ALWAYS be adult supervision, whether it's for a crawling 9-month-old infant exploring the outside patio area or an experienced school age child who may have had swimming lessons. Swimming lessons for children are great, however do not let the ability to swim give you a false sense of security concerning the safety of a child in the water. Even children who know how to swim may panic when they accidentally

place themselves in deeper than usual water or injure themselves falling into the pool and drown while unconscious. Also remember to supervise infants and toddlers closely at pool parties. They are quick to escape the line of sight of supervising adults and end up in the pool at such large gatherings.

If you're planning to take the family on a road trip this summer or even just planning to run up to the grocery store to

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pick up milk, it's very important to make sure the entire family is buckled up. Parents should always set a good example for their children and wear their seatbelts. It is also the parents' responsibility to ensure proper car seat safety for their children. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children should face the rear of the vehicle until they are at least 20 lbs. and 1 year of age, with infants positioned at a 45-degree angle. This position provides increased protection of the spinal column in a head on crash. The safest place for children is in the middle of the rear seat. The more car surrounding the child, the better. Rear-facing infant seats should never be used in the front passenger seat of any vehicle equipped with a passenger-side