

## Families Must Make Safety a Priority While Camping and Hiking

*Safe Kids Columbus offers families important outdoor safety tips*

**Columbus, GA** — Sleeping bag? Check. Hiking boots? Check. Safety guidelines? A must! While the preparations for a family camping or hiking trip usually include a review of the necessary gear, parents should also review safety guidelines with their children, paying special attention to potential hazards specific to camping, hiking, outdoor recreation, water, and falls.

“Going camping or hiking can be wonderful activities for parents to do with their children, but it is essential to remember key safety guidelines as you’ll be leaving the daily environment your kids are used to,” says Christy Hubbard Safe Kids Columbus coordinator. “A campfire is a serious responsibility because it’s the only situation where a family is purposely starting a fire outdoors and a long way from a pressurized water supply or the nearest fire engine.”

Campfires, portable stoves, heaters and fuel-burning lanterns – in addition to the danger of starting an uncontrolled brush fire – all produce carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless and odorless gas that can poison a child very quickly. “About 30 campers each year die of CO poisoning,” says Hubbard. “If someone near a campfire or portable stove seems drowsy, disoriented or sick, move that person away from the fire immediately to get some fresh air.”

Safe Kids Columbus recommends these safety guidelines around campfires and portable heating devices:

- Keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children.
- Never use matches, lighters, candles or any device powered by kerosene, propane or other heating fuel inside a tent or camper.
- Always actively supervise children near a campfire or portable stove. Follow posted rules about campfires, and do not light fires in windy or excessively dry conditions.
- Keep a bucket of water and a shovel near the fire at all times, and extinguish the fire completely before going to sleep or leaving the site.

Also keep these guidelines in mind while camping and hiking:

- Keep first aid supplies and emergency phone numbers handy, and know where the nearest phone is located. Cell phones might not work in remote areas.
- Let friends and relatives know where you are going and when you are coming home.
- Never let children hike alone.
- Dress children in layers of clothing to help prevent heat-related illness and hypothermia. A child’s body temperature changes faster than an adult’s.
- Do not push kids to go on a longer or more strenuous hike than they can handle. Exhausted children are more likely to fall, wander off or otherwise get injured.
- Bring plenty of drinking water or sports drinks and high-energy snacks.
- Kids should wear hiking boots and clothing that offers protection from scrapes, bites and poisonous plants. Following the manufacturer’s instructions, apply insect repellent to a child’s clothing and exposed skin.
- Always supervise young children near water and insist your children wear personal flotation devices when out on boats, near open bodies of water or participating in water sports.
- Apply sunscreen rated SPF 15 or higher to your child’s exposed skin 15 to 30 minutes before going out, and reapply frequently. It is possible to get a sunburn in cloudy conditions.

*For more information about your local coalition activities, visit [www.safekidscolumbusga.com](http://www.safekidscolumbusga.com). Safe Kids Columbus works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Its members include public safety agencies, teachers, EMTs, county commissioners, health educators, nurses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, public health organizations, local government, and many others concerned about the well being of our children. Safe Kids Columbus is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Columbus was founded in 1998 and is led by the Columbus Health Department.*

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