

PARENT PLUS

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Follow these hot tips for campfire safety

Telling stories, roasting marshmallows, enjoying nature. Many childhood memories will be formed around a campfire this summer. To make sure all memories are happy ones, adults and children should follow safety precautions.

Campfires are the leading cause of children's camping injuries, with burns accounting for 74% of injuries. Half of the children admitted to hospitals with burns are younger than 4 years old, according to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

The following tips from fire and health experts can help keep children safe around campfires:

- Always supervise children around fires.
- Set a safety zone around the fire and designate a play area a safe distance away from the fire.
- Never allow young children to build a fire or throw things into the fire, even with adult supervision.
- Keep lighters and matches out of children's reach and sight.
- Teach children to stop, drop and roll if they or their clothing catches on fire.

Adults should watch children while roasting marshmallows, hold sticks for

younger children and teach older kids to stand as far from the fire as possible, according to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. Children also should be told not to touch the end of the stick after it has been in the fire.

Fire safety experts offer the following tips for building a safe fire:

- When available, use designated fire pits to build fires.
- Circle the fire pit with rocks, and clear a 5-foot area around it down to the soil.
- Build a fire downwind from anything flammable, such as homes, tents or firewood, and avoid building the fire underneath overhanging tree branches.
- Never use flammable liquid to start a fire.
- Burn only natural vegetation.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Have water and a shovel nearby to extinguish a fire quickly.



When finished, make sure the campfire has been extinguished properly. Severe burns can be caused by leftover coals, which can remain hot for 24 hours. To extinguish a campfire, fire safety experts suggest drowning it with water, then stirring the fire with water and dirt until the ashes are cold to the touch.

— Trisha Koriath

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