



Strong Fathers, Strong Families

Boosting "dad time" benefits everyone!

Whether you're a father living full-time with your children or co-parenting under different roofs, sharing small moments with your kids is a great way to create lasting memories. And experts say that consistent bonding time with dad or other positive male role models, however brief, holds considerable sway over a child's healthy development.

Bond early, bond better. Developing father-child connections early on can have lifelong impact. In fact, "studies suggest that infants whose fathers play with them have higher cognitive skills; as toddlers they are better problem-solvers; and as school-age children they have higher IQ scores, greater vocabulary and do better academically," says Elana Mansoor, Psy.D., assistant professor of clinical pediatrics and co-project director of the University of Miami Families First Network parenting program.

Share hugs often. "The more you pick up and hold your little ones, the more they feel they can count on you to meet their needs," notes Mansoor. And dads benefit from these types of one-on-one interactions, too: Research suggests that involved fathers feel more self-confident and effective in their role as parents, enjoy a deeper sense of connection to their children and experience greater contentment in their lives.

Take on the school run. Something as simple as walking (or driving) your child to school gives them a good 10-15 minutes or so of your undivided attention. Picking them up after school can be even more rewarding. "Knowing that dad is waiting for them instills a sense of trust – and helps develop confidence – so kids feel empowered and important, which builds self-esteem," says Holly Zwerling, CEO/president of the Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida.



Make every minute count. Between commuting, work and other daily obligations, many dads are lucky just to make it home in time to tuck the kids into bed or read a story before lights out. But rest assured, "It's not about the amount of time you have to give, but the quality of that time," says Mansoor. "So be an active listener. Reflect on what your child is saying. Make observations about what they're doing. And praise their efforts."

Celebrate their endeavors. Attend your child's school events and extracurricular activities as often as you can, and demonstrate your support and pride, says Zwerling. "Bring flowers to your daughter's play or make a sign that cheers on your son's or daughter's team while you watch from the

stands," she says. "The more you show up and recognize their effort, the more special they'll feel – and the stronger the bond between you and your child becomes."

Little things mean a lot. Full-time dad or co-parent, you can easily turn daily activities into something special. "Sing a song to your little one during their bath, record a bedtime story and include their name in it, or leave a message on the bathroom mirror for when they wake up," suggests Mansoor. Even if you're squeezed for time, these shared moments can take on great significance for children – and even more so when they become traditions between father and child!

Written by Beryl Meyer



Summer Health & Safety

Help your kids avoid the season's most-likely mishaps

Day camp, the beach, the pool or park – the world becomes one huge playground once school lets out. And while all the extra running around, outdoor activities and new environments mean a whole lot of fun, they also carry with them many ways in which your child could become hurt or injured. Here's how to keep them safe:

Reduce the risk of bites. While it's impossible to get through summer without a bite, there are things you can do to help protect your child, notes Judy Schaechter, M.D., director of the Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Miami and chair of the University of Miami Department of Pediatrics.

"Insect repellent sprays and lotions with DEET are an effective deterrent against disease-carrying mosquitoes, including daytime-active *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which carry the Zika virus," she says.

Dressing children in clothing with a very tight weave and choosing light colors over dark hues, which can act like a magnet for mosquitoes, are also recommended, as are plug-in fans. "They help keep mosquitoes at bay," says Schaechter, who suggests keeping airflow concentrated at children's legs, as mosquitoes prefer to travel close to the ground.

Keep food poisoning from spoiling the fun.

Summer picnics are a great way for families to enjoy time outdoors, but you must be mindful of how hot weather can affect your food. To stay safe, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend keeping perishables, including meat, poultry, fish, dairy products and all cooked leftovers, as well as foods containing eggs, in a cooler filled with ice – placed in the shade, if possible.

Barbecues, too, have the potential to land meat-lovers in the ER. Undercooked

hamburgers can cause an outbreak of *E. coli*, a foodborne illness that causes severe diarrhea and abdominal pain. Hot dogs taken off the grill too soon can result in exposure to listeria, a bacterial illness that can manifest in a headache and stiff neck, along with fever and muscle aches.

Educate your family about food safety to ensure they stay healthy and practice these CDC-recommended food-prep steps: 1) Cook to the right temperature; 2) wash hands and surfaces often; 3) refrigerate promptly; and 4) keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate from ready-to-eat foods in order to avoid the spread of illness-causing bacteria.

Ban sunburn and sidestep heatstroke.

Kids live for the outdoors in summer, but they especially need protection, as a bad burn or even frequent tanning in childhood can show up as skin cancer years later. "As much as

possible, encourage kids to wear sun-protective clothing, sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat, along with a broad-spectrum sunscreen that safeguards against UVA and UVB rays," urges Schaechter. A sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or more is an important ally in protecting young skin against the sun's damaging effects.

The World Health Organization (WHO) advises limiting children's time in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when ultraviolet rays are strongest. Stay alert to overexposure and seek shade when kids need a breather from the sun, but keep in mind that trees or umbrellas don't offer complete protection.

Even young and healthy people can get sick from the heat if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather and become dehydrated, notes Schaechter; infants and children up to 4 years of age are most vulnerable. "Encourage children to drink water before, during and after spending time outdoors," she says. "Skim milk is also good for super-hydration as it provides calcium and vitamin D, and is a more healthful choice than sports drinks, caffeinated beverages and vitamin waters."

Stay safe in the water. The first rule of water safety, Schaechter says, is to never leave your child unsupervised around any body of water. "An adult has to be designated to stand watch at all times," she stresses. If you have a pool, "Make sure there's no furniture near it, or balls or toys close to the water's edge that children might be tempted to lean over and grab."

To ensure a fun, accident-free day in or by the water, the Injury Free Coalition for Kids Miami recommends educating children and teens to be on the alert and stay away from any electrical appliances; confirm water depth before diving (and only in a pool that's been approved for it), and refrain from diving in waters less than 9 feet deep; immediately get out of the water if there's a thunder- or lightning storm warning; keep in mind that inflatable swimming devices such as rafts, tubes and noodles are toys and should not be relied upon to prevent drowning; and avoid roughhousing, which can lead to a fatality.

If at all possible, teach kids to swim at an early age. Formal swimming lessons can protect young children from drowning. And adolescents and grown-ups alike should learn CPR (call your local Red Cross chapter and learn it online).

For more ways to keep children safe – on the playground, riding bikes, playing sports – go to www.injuryfree.org.

Written by Beryl Meyer



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Your Summer Safety Checklist

Accidents happen, so play it safe and be prepared. Judy Schaechter, M.D., director of the Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Miami and chair of the University of Miami Department of Pediatrics, advises stocking up on these must-haves for your medicine cabinet:

Over-the-Counter Medicines & Treatments

- Acetaminophen for fever
- Benadryl (generic)
- Ibuprofen for inflammation
- Hydrocortisone 0.1%

First-Aid Supplies

- Adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Cotton
- An ice pack (stored in the freezer)
- Gauze
- Sanitizer (wipes, spray or lotion/gel)
- Water (either to drink or clean a wound)
- Ace wrap bandages

Don't forget to dispose of outdated medications, says Schaechter. "They might be used mistakenly, before seeing a doctor and getting a diagnosis, or taken on impulse by an unknowing or upset adolescent."

Emergency Phone Numbers to Keep Handy:

- Your pediatrician or primary care doctor
- Regional animal control center
- Regional poison control center 800.222.1222
- Local police, fire department, EMS 911
- Local hospital
- Nearest relative or neighbor



Family-Friendly Things to Do and See in Miami on the Cheap!

Sign up for summer fun without straining your wallet

Libraries

The Miami-Dade Public Library System's **downtown branch** offers regular story time for toddlers and preschoolers, and game nights for teenagers. At the **North Dade** and **South Dade** branches, the YOUmedia program give teens the tools to make their own creative projects, from podcasts to films to video games, using tools on-site at the library. Families can explore the city's other cultural hubs using the library's Museum Pass, a get-in-free card available for check-out that allows up to four family members access to 10 Miami museums, including **HistoryMiami**, **Vizcaya Museum & Gardens** and the **Frost Art Museum**.

Museums

At **PAMM**, admission is free on the first Thursday and second Saturday of every month, with the latter featuring hands-on activities for children led by multilingual artist staff. **Miami Children's Museum** offers free admission every third Friday. This summer kids can explore the new Dino Island exhibit. At the **Wolfsonian-FIU**, the first Saturday of each month is Discover Design Free Family Day, with activities like building sea creatures from a "treasure chest" of materials, and taking Polaroid pictures to start kids' own photo journals. The program is free for children and accompanying adults.

Parks

One of the city's newest parks, **Omni Park Miami**, covers seven downtown acres filled with a skateboarding area, mobile library and plenty of green space. A performing area hosts live music, while a community gathering space is home to **Boho Market**. For kids who like to be active, **Oleta River State Park** is the place to be. Six dollars gets the whole family into this natural playground perfect for biking, nature walks and kayaking. Farther south, **Coral Reef Park** boasts a covered playground; paths for walking, jogging and biking; and plenty of open play areas.


Community Events

June is **Miami Film Month**, offering discounted movie tickets at theaters across Miami – including for kids' films. **Coral Gables Art Cinema**, which offers offbeat films for children, has screenings of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *The Painting* and a National Theatre Live performance of *Peter Pan*.

Marlins Park offers half-price tickets on Tuesdays; Sunday games include kid-friendly pregame entertainment, as well as Aquafina Family Four-Pack packages that include a hot dog and drink with each ticket.

Parents can expand their kids' culinary horizons at the **Redland Summer Fruit Fest** on June 10, which offers samples from a

smorgasbord of tropical dishes and drinks. Admission costs \$8 for adults; kids 11 and under get in free.

Looking for more cultural events for kids? Browse the **Culture Shock Miami** website. The program offers \$5 tickets to students ages 13-22 at performing arts venues around the city. The dance performance *Volcanic* at Miami Theater Center; the film *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead* at Coral Gables Art Cinema; and the musical *Piaf, Voz y Delirio* at Miami-Dade County Auditorium are all part of this summer's program. 

Miami-Dade Public Library System

305.375.2665; www.mdpls.org

Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM)

305.375.3000; www.pamm.org

Miami Children's Museum

305.373.5437

www.miamichildrensmuseum.org

Wolfsonian-FIU

305.531.1001; www.wolfsonian.org

Omni Park Miami

www.omniparkmiami.com

Oleta River State Park

305.919.1844

www.floridastateparks.org/park/oleta-river

Coral Reef Park

305.235.1593

www.palmettobay-fl.gov/node/87

Miami Film Month

305.539.3000; www.miamiandbeaches.com/special-offers/monthly-deals/miami-film-month

Coral Gables Art Cinema

786.385.9689; www.gablescinema.com

Marlins Park

305.480.1300

miami.marlins.mlb.com/mia/ballpark

Redland Summer Fruit Fest

305.247.5727

www.redlandfruitandspice.com/event/summer-fruit

Culture Shock Miami

305.375.1949

www.cultureshockmiami.com

Written by Ciara LaVelle

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