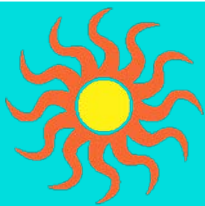
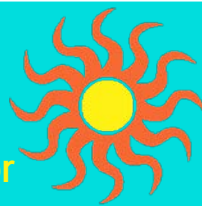


Early Learning Parents' Pages



June 2016



Learn how to prepare your family for Florida's summer heat, mosquitoes and more.

Step Outside During Great Outdoors Month

Venture outside and discover all Florida has to offer this June. [Great Outdoors Month](#) focuses on experiencing the natural wonders of the world around you and teaching children how to live a healthy lifestyle, while enjoying the "great outdoors."

[Get Outdoors Florida!](#) engages communities, families and individuals in outdoor experiences to achieve healthier lifestyles and foster an appreciation for Florida's natural resources. Families can [find resources](#) for ways to get their children interested in fishing, hiking, birding trails and gardening.



Simply walking around your yard, neighborhood or a local park is a great way to teach your child about nature without having to plan a full-day outing. Talking about trees, plants, insects and birds you may encounter is a great opportunity for your child to learn new words. Counting elements in nature you may see during your walk or recognizing patterns in the leaves on a bush or flower can help with practicing math concepts, while showing your child about how the rain and sun help plants grow can teach science concepts.

Visit [state](#) and [national](#) parks throughout June to celebrate Great Outdoors Month. Saturday, June 11 is a great day to get outside and find special events and activities to celebrate National Get Outdoors Day.



Florida State Parks' [Junior Ranger Program](#) is a great way to get young children interested and learning about nature with six CORE activities, and offers the chance to receive an official Junior Ranger badge, patch or pin. Simply visit a participating Florida state park to gather materials and get started.

Florida is home to many rivers, springs, lakes, pools and beaches perfect for families to enjoy the water in the Florida sun. Boating, canoeing, swimming, snorkeling, fishing or tubing are wonderful ways to get out and enjoy activities as a family. Make sure your child is aware of [water safety](#) and learn how to become a "[water watcher](#)" to ensure the best time for your family.

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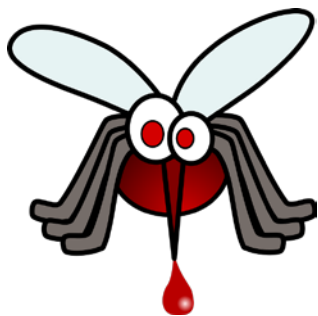
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Prepare for Mosquitoes

With summer weather already heating up Florida, you and your children are likely spending more time outside. Unfortunately, an evening walk or time spent by water may be interrupted by the buzz of mosquitoes.

Mosquito bites are not only irritating, but can lead to large areas of swelling and soreness. Each year, bites from mosquitoes transmit severe illnesses such as yellow fever, the West Nile virus and the more recent Zika virus.



According to the Centers for Disease Control, the [Zika virus](#) is spread primarily through the bite of a particular infected species of mosquito. The illness is usually mild and symptoms including fever, rash, joint pain and red eyes typically do not last more than a week; therefore, many people who have been infected may not realize it. However, the Zika virus infection can cause birth defects such as [microcephaly](#) or other serious brain defects during pregnancy.

In [travel-related cases](#), populated states, such as Florida and New York, are more likely to have residents infected with the Zika virus; although, there have been no reports of any cases acquired directly in the United States. It is important you [protect yourself inside and outside your home](#) by controlling the spread of mosquitoes.

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Summer Car Safety

Parents never think it will happen to them. "Who would leave a child in a locked car? I would never forget my child!" That is exactly what parents think when they hear about a child's death from heatstroke after being left in a car. Unfortunately, these [tragedies can happen to anyone](#).

Each year, a child dies from heatstroke in a vehicle every 10 days. The [temperature in a car can rise quickly](#) and in 88 degree weather, a car's temperature can reach 110 degrees in only 14 minutes. Even when a car's windows are partially down, the temperature can reach 125 degrees in just 20 minutes. Living in Florida, children and pets are prone to heatstroke in the summer because of increasingly high temperatures. A child's body temperature rises three to five times faster than an adult's and a child's bodily functions shut down when his temperature reaches 104 degrees.



"If you are capable of forgetting your cell phone, you are potentially capable of forgetting your child."

David Diamond – Professor of Molecular Physiology at the University of South Florida



Young children sleep so quietly that it can be [easy to forget](#) they are around, especially if you are speaking on the phone or focused on traffic and the work day ahead. Putting an item that you need for work in the backseat such as a purse, briefcase or your shoe is a helpful reminder to check on your child. You can also place a stuffed animal in the front seat as an extra reminder.

Parents are encouraged to call or text their spouse or another relative when their child is dropped off at child care, allowing someone else to know the child is safe. Parents can also request that child care personnel call if their child has not been dropped off by a certain time each day.

Learn about [heatstroke safety tips](#) to keep your child safe in a car.



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Free Summer Meals for Children

During the school year, many children receive free breakfast or lunch at school, but during summer break, some children will not receive enough nutritious food. The [Summer BreakSpot Program](#) or Summer Food Service Program is a federal nutrition program that local nonprofits and schools use to ensure kids in their communities get nutritious meals during the summer.

This federally funded program is under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in Florida. Sites are [locally operated](#) by nonprofit organizations that provide meals and receive reimbursement from the USDA. These meals are served at no charge to the children; however, the site may set a fee for the activity program if they provide one.

FREE MEALS for kids and teens!

SUMMER BREAK SPOT

At most sites, there is no application necessary and any child 18 years old or younger can simply come during meal times to receive a meal. Some sites request adults or responsible teens to accompany young children during meal time and encourage parents to call their site ahead of arrival.

[Find the facts](#) and ensure a child does not go hungry this summer. Text "FoodFL" to 877-877 for more information.

Celebrating Fathers

William Smart, a single father of six children and a Civil War veteran, was the initial inspiration for America's first Father's Day. In 1909, Smart's eldest daughter convinced churches, the YMCA, businesses and government officials in Spokane, Washington to set aside a day to honor fathers. In 1972, Father's Day was named a federal holiday to celebrate fatherhood and the influence of fathers in society by President Richard Nixon.



Fathers play a [significant role](#) in the social-emotional, cognitive, language and motor development of their children, so Celebrate Father's Day this year on Sunday, June 19.

Fathers strengthen development when they take an active role early and often in the lives of their children, even before they are born. Noted sociologist, Dr. David Popenoe's [research](#) shows "fathers are far more than just 'second adults' in the home. Involved fathers bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is likely to bring."

[Research](#) shows that infants of highly involved fathers are more cognitively competent at 6 months. By one year, they continue to have higher cognitive functioning, are better problem solvers as toddlers and have higher IQs by age 3. A father's communication with a toddler is characterized by the child making more sounds or words during [father-child interaction](#). Whereas mothers tend to stress emotional nurturing and have a personal safety focus, fathers push for more independence. Both parenting styles are important in providing learning opportunities for young children.

Let fathers know how important they are in the lives of their children this Father's Day, while showing them how much they are loved.



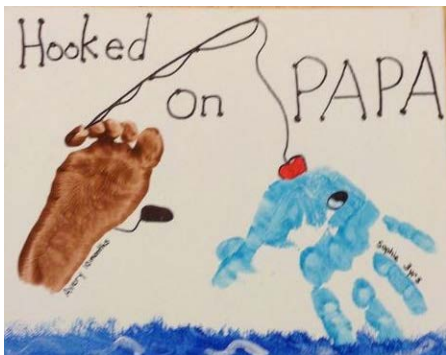
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Celebrating Fathers

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[Pinterest](#) offers great ideas and crafts perfect for your children's father. If your children love fishing with their father, try this fun craft. Help your child place one foot and one hand in two different colors of washable paint. Put the footprint and handprint on a piece of paper, using the foot as a fishing rod and the handprint as a fish.



Have your children draw a rod and reel off the footprint and eyes and a mouth on the "fish." Now your children have a great gift to show they are "hooked on dad" and an excuse to go fishing.

Prepare for Mosquitoes

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Follow these steps to protect you and your children from mosquito-transmitted illnesses.

- Dress your children in clothing that covers their arms and legs.
- Cover cribs, strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting.
- Do not use insect repellent on babies under 2 months of age.
- Do not use products containing oil of lemon, eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol on children younger than 3 years old.
- In children older than 2 months, do not apply insect repellent on their hands, eyes, mouth or to irritated or broken skin.

If your children have recently traveled or resided in an [affected area](#) and show symptoms of the Zika virus, contact a health care provider and describe the symptoms and where you have traveled. Stay aware with a [weekly Zika virus update](#) from the Florida Department of Health. Learn more about [the facts](#) and get your family prepared this summer.

Look for These Events and More in July

- Celebrate Independence Day on July 4, 2016. Discover fun ideas to get outside with your kids, while celebrating America.
- Look for the Department of Education's Summer Literacy Program, designed to get your children reading during summer.
- Find Summer Learning Activities from the Office of Early Learning, guaranteed to keep your children learning all summer.



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