



Caregiver of Children News

8/2022



DPH recommends the following safety tips:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Communications/Staged/Summer-Safety>

With summer officially upon us, the Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds the public to keep safety in mind as they go about their daily activities this season.

Safety on the Road

- Buckle up on every trip in the car, even if it's just a short ride around town.
- Younger children should ride in size and age-appropriate car safety seats.
- Avoid distractions while driving. Do not text or use your cell phone while driving.
- Never leave children or pets in a parked care – interior temperatures can reach deadly levels in minutes even during moderate temperatures. Look before you lock!
- Parking in the shade with a window cracked DOES NOT stop heat stroke or over heating.
- **If you see a child (or pet) left in a car unattended call 911 immediately!**

Bike and Recreational Safety

- Wear a bicycle helmet every time you get on a bike. Helmets can reduce your risk of head injury by up to 85 percent in a bicycle crash.
- Supervise younger children and assure that they ride with supervision in safe areas away from traffic.
- Wear a compliant helmet, goggles, and long sleeves and pants when riding an All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV); never carry a passenger on a single-rider ATV and no more than one passenger on an ATV designed for two people.
- Wear appropriate multi-sport helmets and safety gear to prevent injuries while skate boarding, inline skating or riding a scooter.

Walker Safety

- Teach your children to look left, right and left again when crossing the street.
- Walk on sidewalks whenever possible, and cross safely using traffic signals and crosswalks.
- If there are no sidewalks, always walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible.
- Watch for cars that are turning or are backing up, especially in driveways and parking lots.
- Wear clothing with reflective materials and carry a turned-on flashlight at dusk and dark.
- Bring a cell phone with you in case of emergencies.

Play and Sports Safety

- Check playground equipment, whether it's in the backyard or at the park, to make sure it is in good repair.
- Playgrounds should have protective surfacing under and around the equipment to protect against falls. This can include sand, mulch, wood chips, shredded tires, or rubber mats.
- If you or your family plays team sports, be sure to use all the appropriate safety gear.
- Learn to recognize the signs of a concussion and seek medical treatment immediately.
- Never leave your child unattended on a playground as accidents can happen quickly.
- Always bring a cell phone with you in case of emergencies.



This program is supported by Senior Resources – Agency on Aging with Title III funds made available under the Older American's Act.

Safety In and Around Water

- An adult should always supervise children in or near water.
- Drowning can occur in minutes and in just a few inches of water. Whenever an infant or toddler is in or near water an adult should always be within an arm's length providing "touch" supervision.
- When boating, everyone should wear US Coast Guard approved life jackets.
- Consider taking a boating safety course, and remember, just as with drinking and driving, alcohol and swimming or boating don't mix.
- Be ready for emergencies by learning CPR and first aid. Keep a phone with you.
- Learning how to swim is a safety skill that lasts a lifetime. It is never too late to learn.
- Classes are available for children and adults at many town recreational centers or through the Red Cross.

Safety in the Sun and Heat

- Avoid sun burning, and intentional tanning. Use sunless tanning products instead.
- The sun is strongest between 10am and 2pm. Plan your activities accordingly.
- Apply sunblock generously (SPF 15 minimum). Reapply frequently if in the water.
- Wear sun protective clothing, wear a brimmed hat, and sunglasses.
- Take periodic breaks from the sun and heat. Seek air conditioning, hydrate, and cool off.
- Drinking fluids on an ongoing basis is important to avoiding dehydration. Sip frequently.
- Infants, children, and the elderly dehydrate faster than adults and need special attention.
- Playing sports/exercising during the heat increases dehydration risks.
- Drink 16 ounces of fluids per hour minimum.

Safety Around the Home

- Never depend on screens to keep children from falling out of windows.
- Open windows from the top, not the bottom, whenever possible.
- Keep furniture away from windows to discourage children from climbing near windows.
- Install window stops so that windows open no more than four inches.
- Install window guards with no more than 4 inches apart to prevent children from falling out of windows.
- For windows on the 6th floor and below, install window guards that adults and older children can open easily in case of fire. For windows on the 7th floor and above, install permanent window guards.
- Window guards screw into the side of a window frame. They are sold in different sizes for various sized windows and adjust for width.
- Guards must meet requirements for spacing and strength, and those that allow for escape in case of emergencies must be difficult for very young children to open.
- Be sure large furniture such as bureaus and book cases are secured to the wall to prevent them falling on children who might try to climb on them.
- Purchase cabinet and door safety locks and move any potential hazards and poisons to a locked cabinet out of reach of children.
- **Know the poison control number and put it in your cell phone: 1-800-222-1222**

Outdoor Food Safety

- Regular hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent illness in general including food borne illnesses.
- **Wash your hands especially when you have been in public places.**
- Always wash hands before preparing and eating food. Remind kids, too.
- If soap and water is not available, hand sanitizer is your best option.
- Learn how to BBQ and **cook** food appropriately to avoid food borne illness.
- Know the picnic food **refrigeration** guidelines to avoid food borne illness.
- Make sure you know how to use a propane and/or charcoal grill safely to avoid burns and hazards.

Mosquitos and Tick Safety

- Mosquitos and ticks are out through the summer and early fall.
- Wear protective clothing and use repellent with DEET for best protection, especially if you are going into wooded areas. Use day and night for best protection.
- Do not use bug repellent on babies under 2 months of age.
- Apply sunblock first, let it dry, and then apply bug repellent.
- Check clothing and skin regularly for ticks especially when coming indoors.
- Teach kids how to check themselves for ticks independently so they can when at camp.
- Learn how to remove a tick safely and always call your health care provider if you think you may have been bitten.
- **Concerned about Zika? Learn what you can do to protect yourself. The new state website is listed below!**
- <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Communications/CDC-Syndicated-Content/Zika-Virus>

Safe Summer Celebrations

- Enjoy the 4th of July and all summer celebrations but remember **ALL fireworks are illegal** in the State of Connecticut with the exception of sparklers.
- If you use sparklers, always follow good personal and fire safety practices. Teach kids, too.
- **Drink responsibly:** Adults should plan ahead and have a designated driver if they are going to consume alcohol. Serving alcohol to minors under age 21 is illegal.

Severe Weather Safety

- Summer temperatures increase the likelihood of thunderstorms and severe weather. Know the signs to be safe.
- When in doubt and the weather seems unstable avoid going outdoors and/or seek shelter.
- Stay out of the water (pools, lakes, ocean), and off the water (boating).
- Avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords.
- Unplug appliances and other electrical items such as computers and turn off air conditioners.
- Avoid contact with running water and plumbing. DO NOT: wash your hands, take a shower, wash dishes, or do laundry.
- Stay away from windows and doors and stay off porches.
- Avoid hilltops and open fields. Take shelter in a sturdy building.
- Avoid contact with any metal – motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs, bicycles, etc.
- If you are driving, safely exit the roadway or pull over and park. Stay in the vehicle and turn on the emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. Avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle.

How To Talk To Kids About School Shootings

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/school-shootings-talk-with-kids>

Regardless of the specific topic, it's important to listen.

In the wake of the recent mass shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Tex., parents are wondering how to talk to their children about these horrific events.

The most important action parents and caregivers can take is to listen to their children, says Steven Marans, MSW, PhD, a child and adult psychoanalyst, and Carrie Epstein, LCSW, a clinical social worker, both of whom are co-directors of the Yale Center for Traumatic Stress and Recovery at the Yale Child Study Center.

"Learn first about whether children are aware of what has occurred. Then, talk with them about what impact, if any, the recent events have had on their thoughts, feelings, and behavior," Epstein says.

As we are all confronted by the loss of life and the terror of gun violence that has now been experienced in Uvalde, it is not surprising that many of us may feel saddened and upset as we imagine the pain, grief, and trauma that so many in that community are now experiencing, Marans says.

“We may feel frustrated with the repeated and senseless loss of life. Many may also experience heightened anxiety about the safety of their own children, as the tragedy in Uvalde evokes the worst fears for any parent – the loss of one’s child,” he says. “In the midst of such powerful feelings, it is especially important to consider the best ways we can support our children, who may also have reactions to the news.”

We talked more with Marans and Epstein, who share advice (below) on how parents can navigate potentially difficult conversations with their children on this topic.

Focus first on your own reactions as a parent

Parents can first focus on turning down the volume of their own stress reactions, because kids turn to adults for their emotional stability, as well as for structure, predictability, and order in their daily lives.

There’s the “show me, don’t tell me” approach to demonstrating that normal life routines and expectations still exist, even in the midst of disruptions. But if adults are anxious, depressed, or overwhelmed, they may be more irritable or impatient with their kids, without even realizing it. This can have a direct impact on how children experience their lives.

Once you address your own issues as a parent, you can more easily think from your child’s point of view. For example, when a child is suddenly getting into battles about bedtime, it’s not always easy for the parent to stop and ask, “What does this mean?”

After you’ve had a long day, it’s easy to miss that your child may be trying to communicate something about how they’re feeling. If you can understand that some of the difficulties your child is struggling with may be a reflection of their inability to regulate and put words to their anxiety, you’ll be taking a step toward helping your child take a pause, so they can think about what they are feeling and why. These are important skills to develop and practice at any age.

Here are some tips for parents and caregivers to remember:

- Your ability to listen calmly to your children’s concerns is one of the most powerful ways of helping them feel safe and secure.
- You are the most important source of help for your children.
- Be aware of your own reactions. If you are having difficulty coping with reactions to the tragedy, support from family, trusted friends, clergy, and/or mental health professionals can be helpful.
- Identify your own concerns, fears, and feelings of anxiety, sadness, as well as frustration about loss of life due to violence. By recognizing your own reactions to the tragedy in Uvalde, you will be in a better position to listen to your children and distinguish between your reactions and theirs.
- Phase of development, immediate life circumstances, and the degree to which routines of daily life are disrupted all determine the size and scope of impact on a child’s world.
- Children and adolescents may not be able to describe their reactions or worries. Instead, they may focus on ways they are experiencing disruption to their normal lives. Without help from caregivers, their distress may only be expressed in symptomatic or problematic ways in which they are feeling, acting, and interacting.
- Routines provide children with a sense of predictability and control. When routines are disrupted and safety is compromised, children experience changes in ways their brains and bodies work, which can make them feel even less in control of themselves.

Listening can 'open the door' to a meaningful discussion

Many parents wonder if they should check in on their kids by asking a series of questions. But it's not so much about asking the child, "How are you doing?" over and over throughout the day, which can become counterproductive. Instead, parents can "open the door" to hearing what is on their kids' minds.

With school-age children and adolescents, it can be useful to open discussions by asking whether or not their friends have been talking about the tragedy in Uvalde. This introduction can provide an opportunity to ask about their thoughts and feelings, as well as their questions about what they have been hearing in the news and at home.

Ultimately, however, *listening* is one of the most powerful ways to support children and adolescents who may be experiencing anxiety and sadness. When they no longer feel alone, the chance to verbalize the details of these feelings, questions, and concerns with parents and caregivers can help them achieve greater order and mastery of their own personal reactions to these events. And facilitating a discussion, in and of itself, can provide not only an opportunity for them to be less isolated, but can also be a first step for them to be more active in the face of what can be overwhelming, unwanted feelings.

So, with greater awareness of the specifics of your children's feelings and concerns, you will be in a much better position to engage in a discussion driven by what you have learned from your child, rather than by your own reactions, or by assumptions about the extent to which this tragedy has impacted them.

Encouraging discussion can also help identify ways kids can translate their empathy into activities that can support the well-being of others. This might include kindness toward others, identifying or interrupting bullying, and involvement in tutoring and after-school programs.

Specific to the Uvalde tragedy, this might mean fundraising for victims, political activism to address gun violence, or writing letters to political representatives, among other pro-social activities.

Too much news consumption can become overwhelming for kids and parents

It's a natural inclination to want to learn more information to help us try to better understand the circumstances surrounding disturbing events. But watching the news frequently, or even compulsively, often only increases stressful arousal. Parents who limit their own news consumption will be better able to help kids make sense of what they're seeing and hearing from their own perspectives.

In addition, parents can help their older children, who may be choosing to watch the news on their own, think through whether the frequency with which they are checking the news is helpful, or whether it sometimes becomes less helpful and more stressful. This shouldn't be a lecture; rather, it should open the door to a discussion.

Consider these general principles when talking with your child

When talking with your children, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- How physically close to home are the immediate dangers of the event that occurred?
- Has death, injury, or loss of property occurred to someone they know as a result of this particular catastrophe?
- How much on-going talk or news (TV, radio, social media, etc.) about the event is the child exposed to?
- Have children suffered previous major losses, or other traumatic disruptions and losses in their lives that may make them more vulnerable to heightened fear or sadness in response to the Uvalde tragedy?
- If children are already psychologically struggling, are there new symptoms or difficulties that have emerged in the aftermath of this recent tragedy?

Also, It's important to note that if your children are not attentive to the news or focused on the Uvalde tragedy, it does not mean they are insensitive to others. When their interests and daily lives are not disrupted or threatened, children and adolescents often continue to focus on the immediacy of life that is most familiar and predictable. Discussion with our school-age and adolescent children about the shootings is the best way to learn about the extent to which they may be quietly preoccupied and concerned.

How to answer questions children are likely to have about the tragedy

Our children's questions provide an opportunity to learn what they are thinking and feeling. It is by listening carefully to their queries that we can begin to help them navigate what can feel like a frightening world.

Often what children need most is someone whom they trust to listen to their questions, accept their feelings, and be there for them. Don't worry about knowing exactly the right thing to say—there is no answer that will make everything okay.

Here are some tips for responding to children's questions:

- If children express anxiety and concern about traumatic events, they may be most concerned about the safety and stability of their immediate world of family, friends, and other important figures in their lives. Focus on these concerns first.
- Are we safe? If there is no immediate threat to family and friends, say so. Even in the midst of the horror that we may feel about the tragedy in Uvalde, and the powerful upset we may experience in our identification with the parents and family members of the victims, it may be very difficult to remember that school shootings, while alarmingly familiar in our country, remain extremely rare. It is important for parents and caregivers to be aware of the safety and security plans in place in their children's schools in order to communicate to children that adults are doing—and will continue to do—everything possible to keep them safe.
- If your children ask questions about the aftermath of an event, ask what their concerns are first, so that you can respond to the specific details of *their* worries—not what *you* think their concerns are or should be.
- Respond to questions with the factual information you have. Do not speculate or repeat rumors, and resist over-explaining. The degree of detail children want and need to know will depend on their age and the specific nature of their concerns.
- While none of us can guarantee absolute and permanent safety in an uncertain world, it is vital for parents and caregivers to act as a buffer between vulnerable and frightened children and a world they can't be expected to fully understand.

It's OK if the discussion upsets them

It is natural that your children may get upset when talking about scary or disturbing things. As a parent, being able to listen to your children's frightening ideas and feelings demonstrates your strength and unshakeable commitment to them. When there are scary things going on in the larger world around them, seeing that parents can still parent may be the most reassuring experience that frightened children can have.

Make sure your children realize it is okay to show you when they are upset. When they do, you have helped them take the important first steps in tolerating and coping with strong feelings and scary thoughts. If there is no one there for them, children may try to hide their feelings and become overwhelmed as they try to deal with their worries alone.

Even if they don't ask any questions at first, be ready to talk about it

When upsetting things happen, it is a good idea to be ready to talk with your children. At first, older children may tell you that they don't want or need to discuss it. Asking your children about their ideas and questions is often the best way of distinguishing between their concerns and our concerns in the aftermath of a traumatic event.

In most cases, it is not a good idea to force your children to talk with you about the event, but instead let them know that the door is open for them to come back and discuss their immediate concerns when they are ready.

How to know when children need more help than you can provide

The following are signs and symptoms of stress reactions commonly seen in response to real world events that threaten the sense of safety, predictability, and order in daily life:

- Depressed or irritable mood
- More needy or clingy and difficulty separating
- A resistant and defiant attitude
- Difficulty focusing on tasks or activities of daily life
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Difficulty concentrating
- Physical complaints such as headaches or stomachaches
- Changes in appetite
- Sleep difficulties
- Toileting problems
- Pre-occupation with frightening thoughts

New or increased problematic behaviors and moods may be the only way children currently have to communicate that they are afraid and experiencing stress reactions. Children and adolescents who exhibit these difficulties may not be aware of these changes and, even when they are, may not recognize what is causing them.

Frightening events evoke a range of upsetting but common reactions in all of us. If your child continues to be particularly or unusually upset for several days—especially if they seem upset or worried about many things; are having trouble in school, at home, or with their friends; or experiencing trouble sleeping—then it is a good idea to speak with someone outside the family for advice.

You don't need to wait until your child shows signs of being troubled. Trust your instincts and seek advice whenever you are concerned about the level of distress you are observing in your child.

Embracing your role as a parent

Helping children find words for the fears, confusion, and questions stirred up by the potentially traumatic event can be a crucial next step in helping them to take greater control of their experience.

When you directly demonstrate to your children your interest in what is on their minds, you are also offering them an opportunity to no longer be alone and letting them know that you are not afraid to address their fears, concerns, and questions.



Free COVID- 19 Vaccination Clinic Ages 6 mos. & up

1st dose, 2nd dose, & Boosters

Saturday, July 30th

11:00am-4:00pm

Marcus Plaza/Shoprite

Plaza

624 W. Main ST- Norwich

WALK-INS WELCOME, NO APPOINTMENT REQUIRED

Please bring a health insurance card and photo ID if you have them, but it is **not necessary** to have health insurance or ID to receive the vaccine. No one will be turned away for lack of insurance or ID .



GRIFFIN
HEALTH

Mobile MAT Van



Monthly in Jewett City

2nd Tuesday: 10am-Noon

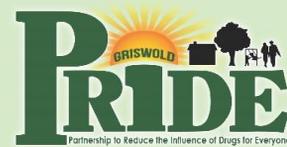
4th Tuesday: 2-4pm

Roving Main Street

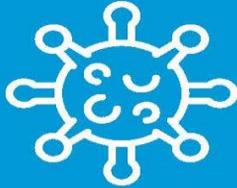
*For more information:
text/call 860-336-9412*

Available Services:

- Easy Access to Suboxone Treatment
 - Wound Care Kits
- Overdose Prevention Resources & Materials [Fentanyl test strips, safe(r) use kits & more]
 - Narcan Kits & Training
 - Safe Sex Supplies
- Linkage to Recovery Support(s) [housing, clothing, employment, transportation food, etc.]
- Treatment Referrals [detox, IOP, Methadone, etc.]
 - Peer Support Services



Stop The Spread



1

Wear A Mask

Keep the covering on your face while out in public.



2

Stay 6 Feet Apart

Keep space between yourself and everyone...everyone.



3

Wash Your Hands

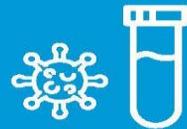
Scrub hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds.



4

Get Tested

Even if you have no symptoms, testing helps stop the spread.



www.ct.gov/coronavirus



We hope you find this month's edition of our Caregiver of Children newsletter informative.

Senior Resources currently produces a monthly caregiver of children newsletter. We are looking for feedback on any ideas you may have for future editions.

Please contact Sally Huck with any ideas/suggestions or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list.

Sally Huck: SHuck@seniorresourcesec.org or 860 887-3561 x 126.

To read previous editions of this newsletter please visit:
www.SeniorResourcesEC.org/stay-informed/grandparent-newsletter