It's summer! School is out but safety better be in

Here are some tips to help keep the children safe during the summer break.

Water safety Children should be supervised while swimming in pools, at the beach and let us not forget the river. It doesn't matter how well your child thinks he/she can swim or how shallow the water appears to be, it only takes an inch of water for a small child to drown. It is, therefore, very important that buckets, bathtubs, and blow-up pools are drained completely after use. Sun exposure Protect all children from excessive sun exposure. Do not believe that only people of 'light complexion' are exposed to the dangers of too much sun. We all are. Protect skin by using a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. This should be applied on a regular basis. The use of hats with wide brims can also protect from sunburns. In the event of sunburn, apply cold compresses to the affected area. Adequate hydration Have you ever tried telling a child to stop playing and take a water break? It's not easy, but it is something that should be done to prevent dehydration. Frequent water breaks are very important. Encourage your child to drink water at regular intervals. He/she should not wait until he/she is feeling thirsty. This may be a sign of heat exhaustion. Other signs include fatigue and cramps. Wear helmets Your child should wear a helmet whenever he/she is using anything with wheels. This includes bicycles, scooters, and rollerblades and skateboards. Many visits are made to the emergency room as a result of bike-related injuries. These can result in severe brain injuries or even death. A helmet should not be an option, but should be a firm rule. Playground safety Never assume that a playground is automatically safe. Playground equipment should be checked before you allow your child to play. Items may become a source of danger from lack of maintenance. You need to check for exposed bolt heads, sharp edges and places where fingers can be pinched. Surfaces of equipment should be checked before to ensure that they are not too hot as this may cause burns. Ropes should be secured at both ends to avoid the possibility of strangulation. The ground should be covered in an appropriate surface material. This reduces the risk of severe injury in the event of a fall. In general, it is always good to look at the surroundings and try to identify all areas of danger. Children should always get permission from their parents before going anywhere or doing anything. An adult should know where they are at all times. Be sure to take them through a summer safety talk so that the holidays can be incident free. Please do not play it too safe by opting to leave them in front of the television all day. Let them play and have fun but ensure that they are always adequately supervised. Dr Lisa N C Franklin-Banton is the president of the Paediatric Association of Jamaica