

Summer: The Season of Fireflies, Flashlights and Fractures



Tips for Diagnosing Common Summer Injuries from Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

It's not a coincidence that the season for extended daylight and outdoor activity is also the season for broken bones. Increased physical activity leads to increased likelihood of bone fractures.

Summer vacation means many children are heading outdoors to participate in their favorite sport. This football field, baseball diamond and soccer pitch all see extensive action during this time of year. Inevitably, young athletes will suffer an injury that will require medical attention. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, nearly 3.5 million sports-related injuries occur each year in the United States to children younger than age 15, with fractures among the most common. When that happens, children are often referred to an orthopedic specialist for treatment, and frequently in Georgia, they are sent to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

The bones of children are different than those of adults and require specialized pediatric care to promote proper healing and future growth. Both pediatric radiologists and pediatric orthopedic surgeons are trained to understand the various types of fractures that a child may experience and the proper treatment needed for each one. Some of the more common sports fractures are growth-plate, greenstick and torus fractures. A growth-plate fracture involves damage to a portion of the bone that contributes to its length and shape. In greenstick fractures, the bone bends like green wood and breaks only on one side. The bone is buckled and weakened but not completely broken with a torus fracture.

When a child has a fracture and sees a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, often the next step is a referral to a specialist in the Children's Radiology department for an x-ray.

Performing more than 240,000 procedures per year, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is a national leader in pediatric radiology. Children's offers a complete range of services for the evaluation of pediatric injury and disease including MRI, CT, PET, ultrasound, fluoroscopy, nuclear medicine, x-ray, bone densitometry and interventional radiology. State-of-the-art equipment and precise protocols specially configured for children are needed to accurately diagnose problems and minimize radiation exposure. At Children's every patient – from infants to high school athletes – receives specialized support and care.

It's important for parents to remember that children can fracture bones accidentally in everyday activities. A fracture does not mean that parents or other adults have not been careful, and parents should not feel guilty if their child has a broken bone. Often, children experience a one or two year interval involving several fractures until they learn how to be more careful or until their bones become stronger. Fractures occur less frequently during the teenage years.

The signs and symptoms of a fracture may include:

- Swelling (most common)
- Fever
- Redness

- Pain (uncommon)

Pediatric orthopedists and radiologists are specially trained to correctly diagnose and treat injuries in children. If a child has been injured, observe him/her carefully and use good judgment. Always consult a pediatrician or other healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns regarding his/her injury; if the injury appears serious or life-threatening, call 911 and seek emergency medical assistance right away.

About Tips Provider

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, one of the leading pediatric healthcare systems in the country, is pleased to offer summer tips for parents and their children. For more tips on a variety of subjects, go to www.choa.org/healthandsafetytips. Children's experts are also available for interviews pertaining to these topics, as well as additional pediatric health care issues. Please contact Children's 24-hour, 7-day-a-week media pager at 404-570-9717 to reach a public relations representative immediately.

About Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, a not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to making kids better today and healthier tomorrow. Our specialized care helps children get better faster and live healthier lives. Managing more than 850,000 patient visits annually at three hospitals and 25 neighborhood locations, Children's is the largest healthcare provider for children in Georgia and one of the largest pediatric clinical care providers in the country. Children's offers access to more than 60 pediatric specialties and programs and is ranked among the top children's hospitals in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*. With generous philanthropic and volunteer support, Children's has impacted the lives of children in Georgia, the United States and throughout the world.