

JULY 2017

# family



How to get kids to wear  
**sunscreen**



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By **John Sucich**  
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**F**idget spinners are marketed as calming devices for stressful situations and as concentration tools — for adults as well as children. Some people say they are helpful to children with ADHD, but others feel they're nothing but a distraction.

If you somehow haven't seen a fidget spinner despite its soaring popularity, they come in a variety of styles but serve the same purpose: The user can rotate them with a centrally located spinner. While some users enjoy just spinning it in their hand, others have used the spinners to do more complex tricks, including spinning them on their nose or elbow. This is, in part, where the distractions have come in.

Teachers have found that fidget spinners distract not only the children who bring them to school, but other children in the classroom who don't have the devices. That's led a number of school districts across the country to ban fidget spinners, and other schools to set policies around them.



**“Classroom interventions like a daily report card or point system can provide a great deal of benefit to students with ADHD if they are implemented correctly and consistently.”**

Dr. Steven Evans,  
Ohio University

“Fidget spinners are different than other traditional, handheld fidgets because they offer more visual stimulation and potential distraction,” says Dr. Lisa Nowinski, an instructor at Harvard Medical School and the director of clinical psychology services at Massachusetts General Hospital's Lurie Center for Autism.

### Fidgeting and ADHD

“There is some evidence that allowing students with ADHD to fidget can minimally help their concentration,” says Dr. Steven Evans, a professor of psychology and co-director of the Center for Intervention Research in Schools at Ohio University. “In fact, fidgeting can minimally help all of us focus. Helpful fidgeting is usually tapping, swinging your foot and other small behaviors. For children with ADHD, we often encourage teachers to allow this behavior in class if it is not disrupting others.”

Fidget spinners, Evans says, go beyond the definition of helpful fidgeting.

“The problem with fidget spinners is that they are going to be very distracting to many children with and without ADHD. The likelihood that they will distract and

potentially disrupt exceeds any potential value a student may experience by using them,” he says. “It is very unlikely that a student with ADHD will noticeably improve their concentration, behavior and productivity due to a fidget spinner.”

### What works?

“The best available approaches for helping students attend in classes are behavior-management approaches, training interventions and medication,” says Evans. “Classroom interventions like a daily report card or point system can provide a great deal of benefit to students with ADHD if they are implemented correctly and consistently.”

With no definitive scientific evidence that fidget spinners help children with ADHD, it may be too early to tell if they belong in the classroom.

“Policies around the use of fidget spinners should not be one-size-fits-all,” says Nowinski. “It can be difficult to manage the various needs of all students in the classroom. Finding a solution that supports the attention and motor regulation of children with ADHD without disrupting the classroom is the ultimate goal.”



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By **John Sucich**  
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**W**e all know how important it is to wear sunscreen during the summer months. But parents also know the act of getting kids to wear sunscreen can be a struggle.

“Starting before the age of 6 months, parents should try their best to have children avoid intense sun exposure completely,” says Dr. Mona Gohara, a board-certified dermatologist practicing in Connecticut. “After the age of 6 months they should be using a broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher with any ultraviolet exposure.”

Gohara says exposure to the sun includes everything from children being outside for an extended period of time to as short as a quick walk.

“Nobody wants you to live under a rock,” she says. “Go to the beach, go to a park, it’s great for the kids – but if you

## How to get kids to wear **SUNSCREEN**

can, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., if you’re outside between those hours, play in the shade.”

### Application tips

Sunscreen should be applied all over a child’s body before she goes outside. Gohara acknowledges that for parents a spray sunscreen is easier to use, but it can be easier to miss spots, so parents should make sure they take the time to rub it in.

She also recommends a stick for areas that can be tricky when applying sunscreen, so lotion doesn’t get in the child’s eyes or mouth.



“I really like sunscreen sticks for around the eyes, the lips, the ears,” she says, “places that people forget and later are actually a really common place for more aggressive skin cancers because people forget them.” She also says for children with skin sensitivity issues, parents should do their best to use sun-protective clothing and recommends that when using sunscreen, rather than applying it directly to the child’s skin, they should squirt it into their hands and then rub it on.

Kids “may be a little less threatened by their mom or dad kind of massaging something

into their arm or leg as opposed to this gloppy, cold, sometimes smelly substance going onto their bodies,” says Gohara.

### Make it a habit

You want your children to understand that wearing sunscreen is part of keeping themselves healthy. One way to help is a product made in Australia whose bottle turns blue with ultraviolet light exposure, so children know when the sun is strong enough that they have to reapply sunscreen: Blue Lizard products are available at Walgreen’s, Walmart and other retailers in the States.

Otherwise, wearing sunscreen should just become part of a child’s routine.

“You really want them to develop a habit of it,” says Gohara. “If you make them understand that it’s like brushing their teeth or eating well or getting good exercise, they’ll be much more likely to continue that later into adulthood.”



# Water safety

What parents and kids need to know

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**By John Sueich**  
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**W**ith as many opportunities as there are to cool off and have fun in the water during the summer months, there are just as many opportunities for dangerous situations. By taking the proper safety precautions, everyone can enjoy the water without worrying.

Here's what your kids – and you – need to know for summer.

“We are asking everyone to do their part by being water-smart,” says Don Lauritzen, communications officer for the American Red Cross. “It all starts with everyone in the family learning about water safety and being able to swim.”

“It's never too late, or too early, to learn how to swim,” adds Becky Turpin, director of

home and community safety for the National Safety Council. “Enroll children in swim lessons and consider adult swim lessons for those who never had the opportunity to learn as a child.”

### Pool safety

Children should always make sure to follow the rules at a pool, and the Red Cross advises that adults should make sure to stay within arm's reach of young children and newer swimmers.

Safety for pool owners doesn't end at being safe in the water.

“Enclose your pool with four-sided, 4-foot fencing and use self-closing, self-latching

gates,” says Lauritzen.

### Beach and lake safety

“Be aware of added risks for natural bodies of water – rip tides, currents and drop-offs can catch children and adults alike off guard,” says Turpin. “These can change without notice as well. Swim in designated swimming areas or where you know the water conditions.”

Take notice of whether there is a lifeguard on duty and stay in those areas, and always swim with a buddy, never alone.

“Drowning happens quickly and quietly,” says Turpin. “It's not like the movies with a lot

of splashing or yelling. If you think someone is struggling in the water, ask them if they are OK or need help. If they can't or don't answer, assume they need immediate help.”

Both the Red Cross and National Safety Council stress that, no matter where it is – pool, beach, lake or otherwise – children should always be supervised by an attentive caregiver when in or near the water. That means someone who is not reading, not using their cell-phone and not drinking alcohol should be watching the children. The same expectation should be made clear to nannies, babysitters or other travel companions.

“In large groups of people, everyone assumes someone else is watching the kids,” says Turpin. “Don't let anyone assume. Declare who is watching the children at all times.”

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Don Lauritzen, American Red Cross