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## Children's Health Tip of the Day


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### How Safely Does Your Garden Grow?

Learning how to take care of a lawn or grow beautiful plants and delicious vegetables can be an enjoyable learning experience for a child. But lawnmowers, power trimmers, sharp-tined rakes, pesticides and fertilizers, as well as other tools of the gardening trade, can pose a great danger to young people.

#### Sowing safe gardening habits

By taking some safety precautions, gardening together can provide quality “together time” for a family.

#### Garden tools

Young children should never be allowed to handle or be present when a power gardening tool is in use. In addition, some rakes, spades and hoes can present a danger. Buying children their own set of age-appropriate gardening tools will help them learn to properly handle the instruments while keeping little fingers and hands safe.

When gardening with, or around, children, pay close attention to your tools. Between uses, place rakes and other pointed tools with the tines down; put them away when not in use. Because of the temptation to play with “daddy’s toys,” never leave a toddler or young child unattended outdoors.

When your child is old enough to use power gardening tools – about 14 years of age, or older, depending on size and maturity level – give him careful instructions on how to use the instruments. Discuss the dangers of mishandling the devices, and the safety measures that must be taken.

#### Lawnmowers

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year about 75 people are killed and about 20,000 are injured on or near riding lawnmowers. One out of every five deaths involves a child. Most of the deaths to children occur when a child falls off the riding mower and is run over, or when a child is in a moving mower’s path.

The most common lawnmower injuries from both riding and push lawnmowers are the loss of fingers, toes, limbs and eyes.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends the following precautions for preventing lawnmower accidents:

- Children under the age of 14 should not be allowed to operate a lawnmower.
- Never allow passengers on a riding mower.
- Keep small children out of the yard or indoors while mowing the lawn.
- Always prepare the lawn for mowing by checking for items such as sticks, rocks and toys.
- Do not allow children to handle fuel. Wipe up spills immediately, and never fill the tank on a mower that is hot.
- Appropriate clothing should be worn – long pants, long-sleeved shirts, eye protection, heavy gloves and sturdy, closed-toe shoes with slip-resistant rubber soles.
- Instruct teens to read the owner's manual and know how to operate the equipment.
- Choose a mower with an automatic blade cut-off. Stay behind the handle until the blade stops. Never reach under a mower while it is still operating.

#### **Lawn and garden care chemicals**

Garden chemicals can be very dangerous – even deadly – if mishandled. If you have garden pesticides or fertilizers, be sure to store them in locked cabinets out of the reach of children. This includes organic materials, some of which are toxic. In addition:

- Store pesticides and fertilizers in original containers. Never use empty food or drink containers for storage.
- Do not mix or apply chemicals in the presence of children.
- Don't allow children to touch plants, shrubs or grass that have a fresh coating of pesticides or fertilizers. Make sure they wash hands thoroughly if they do.

#### **Mud pies and tasty flowers**

Teach children to never put garden soil or plants into their mouths. Some soils contain high amounts of toxic substances, including pesticides, and should not be consumed. Many flowers are also poisonous and cause illness and death if eaten.

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