



Safely Splash into Summer

by Caroline Moassessi, *FAACT's Vice President of Community Relations*



While unpacking my beach chair last month – the one with the soft straps that allow me to carry it like a backpack – my mind wandered through the chair's history. This time-worn piece of portable furniture is the symbol of a safe summer for me. Its pockets have faithfully protected car keys, epinephrine auto-injectors, inhalers, allergen-safe snacks, and water bottles through countless adventures together. I've used it on the beach, at soccer practices, under fireworks displays, and while listening to live music under the stars.

As summer takes off in full swing, FAACT invites you to think about steps you can take to keep your family safe and happy under the sun, in a car, or on a plane. Ten minutes of pre-planning can save a loved one a trip to the emergency room!

Five Tips for Safe Summer Fun

Pre-Pack Fun on the Go – Put together a summer grab-and-go bag so you'll be prepared for spontaneous adventures. Fill a backpack or tote with allergen-safe snacks, napkins, wipes, nut-free butter, dried meat sticks, crackers, drinks, space for an ice pack, and other items to fill hungry tummies. Include extra medications, allergy action plans, and a phone battery recharger. You'll be ready for a fun car ride, last-minute trip to the park, or quick overnight trip.

Set Up a Summer System – Establish a few house rules about outings. Create a list of items to have in hand, such as wipes, phone chargers, and extra medications, in case a backpack gets left in the pizza parlor and you discover this problem 60 miles away (yes, this happened to me). Our house rules include a full gas tank, plans for where and how we'll eat, and no new foods! Summer adventures are for connecting with people and enjoying experiences as a family; culinary exploration can wait until we are home.

Just Say No with a Smile – As FAACT's Director of Education, Kristin Osborne, always says, "No means no," but it doesn't have to be stated aggressively. A gentle and loving, "We are happy to enjoy this time with you, and we brought our safe food so we can focus on the day" goes a long way! Kristin teaches us to say YES to the event and no to the food.

Double the Protection – Carrying extra epinephrine auto-injectors warrants being mentioned again! New activities can be distracting, making it easy to forget meds in hot cars, restaurants, or on the beach. If you are hiking or away from medical care, extra epinephrine will help in case multiple doses are needed as you seek help. Do a mental check when moving to each new activity: Where is the epinephrine? Is my phone fully charged? Will I have cellular service (and if not, how will we access help in an emergency)?

Bring on the BBQ – Smoked ribs and potato salad beg to be eaten, but before digging in, look for hidden allergens. Cookouts or potlucks can be tricky. Stick to a game plan such as bringing your own foods, eating before you go, or working with your hosts to confirm safe foods. Did you know that some store-bought cocktail sauces contain sesame and nuts? Or that soy and dairy can be found in many BBQ sauce or marinades? Hidden allergens can derail summer fun without a plan in place.

My family knows that no matter what adventure we are on, they can rely on that trusty beach chair to meet the needs of hungry tummies and health emergencies. When living with food allergies, we can splash, play, and enjoy summer with a few simple strategies in place.

Happy Summer from your FAACT Family!



SUMMER

