

SUMMER SAFETY**May 2013**

While we are all enjoying the sun and summer fun, below are a few reminders to help keep everyone safe and healthy:

1. Guard Against TOO MUCH SUN. Too much sun can be dangerous. Everyone reacts differently to the sun's ultraviolet rays and people can burn in as little as 15 minutes. The National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention warns that ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can cause skin cancer. The best insurance against sunburn is to avoid direct exposure to the sun. Even on hazy or cloudy days, the sun's rays can cause damaging sunburn. Follow these "safe sun" guidelines and support and encourage the people you support to do the same:

- Remain in the shade whenever possible.
- Wear UV protective sunglasses and a hat to protect your eyes, head, and ears from the sun
- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA/UVB protection of 30 SPF or greater). Apply at least 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply throughout the day. Remember to protect your lips with lip balm that has a minimum SPF of 15
- Be familiar with the side effects of medications you or people for whom you are responsible are taking and take appropriate precautions. Some medications make a person very sensitive to the sun's rays
- Try to stay out of the sun when it is strongest (between 10 am and 2 pm)

2. Protect Against Summertime INSECTS. Insects such as mosquitoes and ticks can carry diseases. If you will be out at night or hiking in tall grasses or wooded areas, use an insect repellent and check skin and clothing for the presence of ticks. Seek medical attention if you/ person you support is bitten by a tick. If you/someone is allergic to any insect bites, remember to carry an allergy kit.

3. Practice WATER SAFETY. Wherever there is water, there is a risk of drowning. Drowning can occur in seconds. The following factors can contribute to a drowning accident:

- A medical condition such as a seizure disorder
- A medical emergency while in the water, such as a heart attack, stroke or cramping
- Use of alcohol or drugs, even prescribed medications
- Water conditions, including temperature, clarity or hidden objects

Adequate supervision and simple precautions can save lives! Always take the following precautions:

- Swim in familiar waters where lifeguards are present
- Be responsive to and anticipate changing conditions. If a storm is approaching, get out of the water
- Always wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) when boating. PFDs must be properly sized and maintained to be effective
- Observe all rules of the swimming area
- Call for help at the first sign of trouble
- **Direct Support Professionals** must maintain visual contact at all times with the individuals for whom they are responsible. Please familiarize yourself with the **Important Information about Drowning** alert (issued February 2011), available on the OPWDD website

4. **Practice TRANSPORTATION SAFETY.** In the summer, vehicles, especially vans, allow for heat build-up and do not provide sufficient ventilation even while in motion. **NEVER** stay or leave people in vans or other vehicles in the summer heat. If you will be driving for a long period, bring water for all passengers to drink during the trip

5. **Guard Against FOOD POISONING.** The USDA warns that food-borne illness (food poisoning) increases in summer months. Because of heat and humidity, harmful bacteria can quickly multiply on food. When this happens, someone eating the food can get sick. Follow these simple steps to safer food in the summertime:

- **Wash hands and surfaces often.** Unwashed hands and surfaces are a prime cause of food-borne illness
- **Separate and cook.** Keep raw meat juices away from ready-to-eat food. Cook meat thoroughly to kill bacteria
- **CHILL.** Keep cold foods cold. Food left unrefrigerated for more than two hours may not be safe to eat. When the temperature is above 90 °F, food should not be left out for more than one hour. **If you have any doubts, throw it out**

6. **Guard Against HEAT RELATED ILLNESSES.** Too much heat can cause serious illness and even death.

- Be aware of the heat, and modify or reschedule outdoor activities accordingly
- Stay in air conditioned areas whenever possible and stay in the shade when outdoors
- Drink plenty of fluids, and limit caffeine. The human body needs water. Dehydration can easily occur in the summer heat even without strenuous exercise or apparent sweating, and can lead to heat related illness
- For more information, see Prevention of Heat Related Illnesses (issued May 2012), available on the OPWDD website