

SUMMER SAFTEY

Make the most of outdoor summertime fun by taking precautions against the heat, sun, water and insects. By knowing and adhering to the following guidelines, you can ensure that the individuals we serve enjoy their outdoor summertime activities in safety.

1. SUNBURN:

The most common outdoor summer complaint is "sunburn." Everyone reacts differently to the sun's ultraviolet rays and people may burn in as little as just 15 minutes. The best insurance against sunburn is to avoid direct exposure to the sun and never to "sunbathe." Encourage individuals to remain in the shade whenever possible. If people use wheelchairs and are unable to move themselves, do not leave them where they are or will be directly exposed to the sun. Even on hazy or cloudy days, the sun's rays can cause damaging sunburn.

If you must spend time in the sun, follow these "safe sun" guidelines:

- Encourage people to use hats. Wide-brimmed hats are better than baseball caps since they protect the ears and neck better.
- Encourage people to wear light-colored, loose fitting clothing.
- Use broad-spectrum sun screen (UVA/UVB protection of 15 SPF or higher). Apply at least 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply throughout the day. Reapply each time you leave the water after swimming. Protect the lips with lip balm that has a minimum SPF of 15.
- Use UV protective sun glasses. Exposure of the eyes to direct sunlight increases the risks of getting cataracts.
- Know that some medications make some people photo-sensitive when exposed to the sun. These medications include: Thorazine, Mellaril and some antibiotics. Even brief exposure to the sun, if taking these medications, can cause photosensitivity. Be familiar with sideeffects of medications and protect people accordingly.
- Avoid sun exposure when the sun is strongest (the hours between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.).
- Be aware that harmful rays reflect from concrete, sand and water.

2. **PREVENT DEHYDRATION:**

Loss of proper hydration can occur easily in the summer heat even without strenuous exercise or apparent sweating. Dehydration can lead to heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat cramps are caused by the loss of salt through sweating. Left unattended, the condition will lead to heat exhaustion, which is characterized by moist and cool skin, dilated pupils, profound sweating, tiredness, headache and nausea/vomiting. Heat stroke, which is the most serious of these conditions, is signaled by hot, dry, red skin. Victims may also exhibit signs of disorientation, rapid shallow breathing or have a quick or weak pulse.

In order to avoid dehydration and heat illnesses:

- Provide individuals with fluids often, avoiding alcohol and caffeinated beverages;
- Offer six to eight ounces of fluids every two hours, even if people do not complain of thirst.
- Seek out cool environments during periods of intense heat. If you do not have air conditioning at home, visit a mall, library or movie theater during the hottest time of the day.
- Be especially careful of people receiving Lithium. Lithium depends upon the body's proper hydration and can cause toxicity when people become dehydrated. Symptoms of Lithium toxicity include vomiting, severe diarrhea, tremor or unsteady gait.

Victims of heat illness should be removed from the heat/sun and allowed to lie down in a cool area with their feet elevated. Unless the victim shows signs of shock, water or salted beverages should be given to sip. Cool, wet wash cloths can cool the body's internal temperature.

3. **VAN/VEHICLE PRECAUTIONS:**

NEVER leave people in vans or other vehicles in the summer heat. Vans, especially, allow for radiant heat build-up and do not provide sufficient ventilation while in motion. Heat illnesses and even death can occur from having people wait in vehicles.

- Protect people in window seats with sun screen and protective clothing.
- Bring water with you and provide passengers with it on long, hot trips.

4. **SUMMERTIME INSECTS:**

Generally, people are best protected from ticks and mosquitoes by using insect repellent containing DEET. However, if there are signs of a reaction to a repellent, seek out a medical professional immediately.

- Avoid walking through high grasses and wooded areas, if possible.
- Check people for ticks. The entire body should be visually checked with special attention to the scalp and to areas where the clothing was tight, such as socks and belts. If you find a tick, consult a health care professional.

5. **SWIMMER'S EAR:**

After swimming, be sure the inside of the ear is dried thoroughly with a towel to prevent "swimmer's ear," which is an itchy and/or painful infection of the ear. Avoid swimming in polluted lakes and rivers. Individuals prone to ear infections should use ear plugs when swimming.