

Family Health and Safety Tips for the Summer

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Summer is here and its arrival marks the beginning of family vacations, cookouts and hours spent in the sun. Here are some basic health and safety tips to help you and your family have a safe and memorable summer.

Amusement parks, Here we come...

Typically, family vacations include amusement parks. Although they provide opportunities for hours of fun, they also have the potential for family members to become separated. Getting lost among thousands of people, in a highly congested area, can be a scary experience for both parents and children. The National Safety Council suggests the following guidelines:

- Select a meeting place in case someone gets lost.
- Instruct children to go to an employee if they are in trouble.
- Make sure children know their parents names.
- Always carry photos of your children.
- Teach your children to never go with a stranger.

Cookouts and Picnics...

These summertime favorites are generally carefree, but it's always a good idea to be prepared. Here are some simple guidelines to follow:

- Pack well-wrapped food into an insulated cooler and keep it in the shade with the lid on.
- Barbequing? Cook burgers until they're no longer pink in the middle and poultry until the juices run clear from the thickest part of the meat.
- Eat everything within a two-hour period and return leftovers to the cooler.
- Grill away from anything that can burn.

- If you get burned, immerse the burned area in cold water until it's pain free, both in and out of water. This could take 10-45 minutes.
- Dispose of garbage properly. Don't litter when visiting camping areas or parks.
- Cover food at outdoor events to avoid attracting bees and wasps.

On the road again...

Summertime is popular for family trips, both near and far. The following simple safety tips can help make your trip a safe one:

- Be sure to get enough rest the day before a trip.
- If possible, avoid driving alone.
- Don't use the cruise control. Instead, do the driving yourself.
- Keep the car's temperature cool and play the radio.
- Don't start a trip late in the day. Avoid driving at night.
- Stop every two hours to stretch your legs.
- Try to avoid eating heavy meals at least two hours before traveling. Don't read in a car, plane, train or boat while it's moving. Sit in the front seat of a car and focus your eyes on the horizon. Following these tips could lessen your chance of experiencing motion sickness while traveling.
- If traveling to countries with poor sanitation, drink bottled water or boiled water. These areas tend to have contaminated water that can make you sick.
- Don't drink and drive. Even one or two drinks can affect your ability to drive safely. Choose a designated driver and make sure that person drinks non-alcoholic beverages. If you have no designated driver, give your keys to a sober friend or call a taxi.

Fun in the Sun...

Summer is the season for people to be outdoors. Whether you are outside for work or play, that hot summer sun will shine. With temperatures soaring near 90 degrees day after day, here are some tips to prepare you for inevitable summer heat:

- Drink plenty of fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. Water is the best fluid to drink, but a quick fix to quench your thirst is an electrolyte-rich sports drink, which replaces salt and minerals that are lost during heavy sweating.
- To avoid exposure to ultraviolet radiation, wear a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, pants, and sunglasses that filter out at least 90% of the UV rays. Sunscreen should have an SPF of at least 15 and the time spent in the sun should be limited from 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Eat smaller meals more often. Avoid food high in proteins since they increase metabolic heat.
- Wear loose fitting, light colored clothing.
- Remember your pets. Provide them with extra water and don't leave them in a parked vehicle, even if you crack the windows. There isn't enough air circulation to keep them from getting hot.
- Be aware of symptoms of heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

Symptoms of heat stroke:

- High body temperature
- Red skin with no sweating
- Rapid pulse
- Headache, nausea or confusion

If you see these signs, call for medical assistance, move the person to the shade, and keep them cool. Bathe the person in cold water.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion, which can lead to heat stroke:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Weakness
- Headache, nausea or fainting

If you see these signs, help the person cool down. If symptoms continue or become worse, immediately seek medical attention.

Staying safe in the great outdoors...

Let's face it. Summertime means mosquitoes, bees, and wasps buzzing around. Tick infested woods and poison ivy plants are in full bloom. Stay itch and bite-free by following these simple safety tips:

- Parents and children should be able to identify poison ivy, oak, and sumac.
- Keep uninvited insects, like mosquitoes, away with repellent and citronella candles.
- Watch tick bites for symptoms (rash or flu-like symptoms) of Lyme disease. Remove ticks with tweezers and treat bites with a topical antibiotic. Wear insect repellent with deet, light colored clothes, and tuck pant legs into socks and shirt into pants.

General Health and Safety Reminders...

The kids are out of school for the summer and they are ready to play so you can count on them spending a lot of time in the sun. Here are some tips to keep them safe.

- Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). The training is valuable and will last a lifetime.
- Swim safely and never let children swim unsupervised. Teach them rules such as: don't dive into unfamiliar water and never push or jump on others in the water. Teach children to use the buddy system so they aren't swimming alone.
- Always wear a helmet and protective gear, whether riding a bicycle, skateboarding, in-line skating, riding horses, motorcycles, and ATV's. Make sure helmets are positioned properly and fit snugly with the straps properly buckled.
- Never let children wear clothing that have drawstrings or loose straps while playing on playground equipment so strangulation will not occur. Make sure equipment is secured and swings are made of rubber or canvas. Check the surface under the equipment to see if it is soft so it will provide an absorbed fall.

For additional information, contact your local Outreach and Extension, or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program at 1.800.995.8503.

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