

Warm Weather Tips

As the weather improves and everyone increases their outdoor activities, it becomes important to follow certain suggestions to keep you and your children healthy.

Prevention of Dehydration

It is important, as the temperature increases, to increase your fluid intake. It is not necessary, unless you are a marathon runner, to drink gator aid or any of the other drinks advertised. Water is the best fluid for you to drink. Your first symptoms of dehydration will be a headache and nausea.

Prevention of Skin Cancer

The best news about melanoma is that many cases of skin cancer can be prevented simply by following these precautions:

- **Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** Because the sun's rays are strongest during this period, try to schedule outdoor activities for other times of the day, even in winter or when the sky is cloudy. You absorb UV radiation year-round, and clouds offer little protection from damaging rays.
- **Wear sunscreen year-round.** Sunscreens don't filter out all harmful UV radiation, especially the radiation that can lead to melanoma. But they play a major role in an overall sun-protection program. Be sure to use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 when you go outside, year-round. Use a generous amount of sunscreen on all exposed skin, including your lips, the tips of your ears, and the backs of your hands and neck.

For the most protection, apply sunscreen 20 to 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply it every two hours throughout the day, as well as after swimming or exercising. Apply sunscreen to young children before they go outdoors, and teach older children and teens how to use sunscreen to protect themselves. Keep a bottle of sunscreen in your car as well as with your gardening tools and sports and camping gear to remind yourself and your family to use it.

- **Wear protective clothing.** Sunscreens don't provide complete protection from UV rays. That's why it's a good idea to also wear dark, tightly woven clothing that covers your arms and legs, and a broad-brimmed hat, which provides more

- protection than a baseball cap or visor does. Some companies also sell photo protective clothing. Your dermatologist can recommend an appropriate brand. Don't forget sunglasses. Look for those that block both UVA and UVB rays.
- **Avoid tanning beds and tan-accelerating agents.** Tanning beds emit UVA rays, which may be as dangerous as UVB rays — especially since UVA light penetrates deeper into your skin and causes precancerous skin lesions.
 - **Be aware of sun-sensitizing medications.** Some common prescription and over-the-counter drugs — including antibiotics; certain cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes medications; birth control pills; nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others); and the acne medicine isotretinoin (Accutane) — can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the side effects of any medications you take. If they increase your sensitivity to sunlight, be sure to take extra precautions.
 - **Check your skin regularly and report changes to your doctor.** Examine your skin often for new skin growths or changes in existing moles, freckles, bumps and birthmarks. With the help of mirrors, check your face, neck, ears and scalp. Examine your chest and trunk, and the tops and undersides of your arms and hands. Examine both the front and back of your legs, and your feet, including the soles and the spaces between your toes. Also check your genital area, including between your buttocks.
 - **Have regular skin exams.** Consult your doctor for a complete skin exam every year if you're older than 40, or more often if you're at high risk of developing melanoma.

Prevention of Injuries

Many children are involved in sports during the warm weather. Make sure they wear the appropriate protective gear when playing sports such as softball, baseball, soccer and lacrosse. Protect your children by insuring that they wear helmets and appropriate pads when bicycle riding, skate boarding and rollerblading

Other protection tips

The best way to prevent poison ivy and poison oak is to make sure make sure your children can recognize the plants. Show them a colored photograph and encourage them to stay out of areas with thick plant cover.

If your children suffer from spring and summer allergies make sure they begin taking their allergy medication before the season starts. If you wait until symptoms begin, the medication may not be as effective.

Bees and hornets are attracted to fragrances from hair spray, scented soaps, lotions and oils. They also like bright colors in particular floral prints. Any food or cans such as soda cans will also attract them. Avoiding any of the above will help prevent bee stings.

To avoid mosquito bites you should follow the same tips as above for avoiding bee stings. In addition, avoid being outside from dusk to dawn which is peak biting time. You should try to stay away from standing water such as that in a pool. Use an insect repellent on exposed skin which contains DEET. For children, make sure you use a pediatric insect repellent. Do not use under clothing or near the mouth or eyes.

I wish everyone a healthy spring and summer.