

# Prevention Newsletter

...for the health and well-being of you and your family.

July, 2009

*With summer serving as the unofficial start to the celebration of fun in the sun, you want to make sure it is as safe and healthy for you and your family as possible. But oftentimes, the sunny days of summer can be accompanied by serious dangers such as food poisoning, drowning, allergy attacks, heat-related illnesses, sunburns, and the stress of traveling.*

*Summer safety is no laughing matter!*

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## Summer Safety as Important as Summer Fun

### Burgers, Hot Dogs, and Salmonella?

Summer is synonymous with backyard barbecues and frolicking in the sun with family and friends. At some point throughout the summer, most of us will find ourselves flipping burgers behind the grill or pulling out our Tupperware to transport a bin of grandma's famous potato salad to and from the party. But unfortunately, if you aren't careful about handling foods during cookouts, you are putting yourself and others at risk for potential food-related illnesses.

Experts say that food poisoning peaks in summer months for two main reasons: 1. Bacteria grows fastest in warm, humid weather, and 2. In general, people do not pay as close of attention to cleanliness when eating outside.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are more than 200 diseases that can be spread through food. The following is a list of 10 rules suggested by the CDC that can help you have a safe cookout.

1. Keep your hands clean; dirty hands are the most common way food gets contaminated.
2. Wash cooking equipment, dishes, and utensils between uses - be sure to clean the grill's surface after each use and to wash cutting boards after cutting raw meat.
3. Rinse fruits and vegetables - meat and poultry aren't the only foods that harbor bacteria.

*Millions of people will start the summer season by taking a road trip.*



4. Keep your cool - store perishables in a cooler with ice on top, not just underneath. Bring one cooler for drinks and one for food. Never eat anything that has been left out of a refrigerator or cooler for more than two hours.
5. Invest in a meat thermometer - the time frame to cook foods thoroughly on a grill may be different than your stove at home. A meat thermometer is the best way to ensure you've cooked foods adequately.
6. Tell your kids about food safety - teach them the importance of hand washing and that food can make them ill if not properly handled.
7. Enjoy non-perishable snacks - if you're planning to be outside for a while, bring some non-perishable foods that won't spoil.
8. Play it safe with leftovers - don't keep food that has been sitting out longer than two hours.
9. Call your doctor if you get sick - symptoms usually develop 8 to 48 hours after eating the contaminated food. If they persist or grow severe, contact your doctor.
10. When in doubt, throw it out - if you think something was contaminated while being prepared, improperly cooked, or has sat out too long, throw it away.

### **Backyard Pool Safety**

What could be better than a dip in the pool and fun in the sun? Swimming and water play offer cool relief from the summer heat. But water can also be dangerous for children and parents who aren't aware of all the possible dangers associated with backyard pools. Consider these statistics about water-related injuries in the United States:

- Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death (after car accidents) among kids under age 14.
- Most drownings involving children ages 1 to 4 occur in home swimming pools.
- The majority of young children who drowned were last seen in the home, in the care of one or both parents, and had only been out of sight for less than 5 minutes.
- Young children can drown in less than 2 inches of water.

If possible, do not put a swimming pool in your yard until your children are older than 5 years old. If you already have a pool, protect your children from drowning by following these suggestions regarding your pool.

- Never leave your child alone in or near a pool, even for a moment.
- Install a fence at least four feet high around all sides of the pool.
- Make sure pool gates self-close and self-latch at a height children cannot reach.
- Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook and a life preserver) and a telephone near the pool.
- Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties" — they are not a substitute for a certified life vest.
- Anyone babysitting or watching your child should be able to administer CPR.

- Remove all toys from the pool after use, so children aren't tempted to reach for them.
- After children are done swimming, secure the pool so they cannot get back into it.

Remember, teaching your child how to swim does not automatically make them safe in the water or mean they do not need supervision.

### **Manage Your Summertime Allergies**

Warm weather and high humidity can put a strain on seasonal allergy and asthma sufferers. It's a peak time for certain types of pollen, smog, and mold. Below are some survival tips to help you manage your allergies during the summer months.

- Protect yourself during prime allergy time - stay indoors between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., when outdoor pollen counts are usually the highest.
- Avoid extremes - going between intense outdoor heat and indoor air conditioning can trigger an asthma attack and other allergy symptoms.
- Keep pollen outdoors - wear a mask when mowing the lawn or if you know you are going to be around freshly cut grass. Also, take a shower, wash your hair, and change your clothes to remove any pollen that may have collected on your body. You should also dry clothing inside, rather than on an outside line.
- Patrol your yard - be on the lookout for weeds such as nettle or ragweed and/or oak, birch, cedar, and cottonwood trees – they all can trigger allergies.
- Beware of bees - if you're allergic to bees, protect yourself. Wear shoes, long pants and sleeves. It's also a good idea not to wear scented deodorants, hair products, or perfumes, as these can all attract bees.

Remember to always be prepared for summer allergies regardless of where you are. Why ruin a long-awaited vacation with an easily preventable allergy attack? Pack potential medicines in your purse or carry-on bag when traveling and plan to bring an extra supply just in case. It's better to be overprepared than stuck inside, feeling miserable and missing out on all the fun!

### **Surviving Summertime Scorchers**

To make sure your day at the beach is exactly that — a day at the beach, not a trip to the emergency room – you'll need to be aware of common summer bums such as heat-related illnesses.

Prolonged or intense exposure in hot temperatures can cause heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion occurs when the body loses large amounts of water and salt. As in heat exhaustion, heat cramps can strike when the body loses excessive amounts of fluids and salt, and is accompanied by the loss of other essential nutrients such as potassium and magnesium. The most serious of the heat-related illnesses, heat stroke, occurs when the body suffers from long, intense exposure to heat and loses the ability to cool down itself.

By reducing excessive exposure to high temperatures and taking other precautionary steps, most heat-related illnesses can be avoided. Prevention is your best defense

to protecting your health when temperatures are extremely high. Remember to keep cool and use common sense. Below are some important prevention tips to follow:

- Drink plenty of fluids, regardless of your activity level - don't wait until you feel thirsty and don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar — these actually cause you to lose more body fluids.
- Wear appropriate clothing - choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses.
- Schedule outdoor activities carefully - plan your activities during morning or evening hours rather than during the sun's peak times. Also, try to find as much shade as you can and rest often.
- Pace yourself - if you're not accustomed to being in heat, don't push your body to stay out in it all day.

Although anyone can suffer from heat-related illnesses, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on:

- Infants and young children,
- People aged 65 or older,
- People who have a mental illness, and
- Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure.

### **Play it Safe in the Sun**

Pool parties, cookouts, or just hanging out — kids across the country are glad it's summer. But it's important to shield their skin from the damaging effects of the sun. No matter what they're doing, if they're outside, they need to be protected.

Learn to build safe sun habits into your family's daily routine. Lead by example — children will respond better when they see you protecting your skin. For example, use the American Cancer Society's *Slip! Slop! Slap!*<sup>®</sup> safe sun basics to begin teaching your kids healthy sun habits. Remind them to:

- Slip! on a shirt - always wear protective clothing when out in the sun.
- Slop! on the sunscreen - use one with an SPF of 15 or higher.
- Slap! on a hat - that shades your face, neck, and ears.

Just a few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life, so help your children stay safe in the sun by protecting their skin.

### **Hitting the Road**

Summer is a prime time for family vacations, the kids are out of school and parents are in need of some time away from the office. Many children enjoy traveling; they can see new places, meet new people, and have new experiences. However, traveling can also be anxiety provoking for them. Being in big crowds, sleeping in different beds, and eating unfamiliar foods can all cause extra stress.

The following list of suggestions from the American Psychiatric Association may help

parents minimize their children's anxiety when traveling:

- Let your children help plan the vacation if old enough - this will help them learn about where they are going and how they will get there.
- Leave plenty of time to get to your destination - nothing is more stressful than rushing to leave on time, or racing through traffic to get to your destination on time.
- Keep children occupied, especially on longer road trips - bring food, snacks, games, books, etc., that can keep them busy.
- Try to establish a relatively regular routine while traveling - children are reassured by schedules and predictability.
- Let your children bring something familiar from home - it may be their favorite stuffed animal, blanket, toy, or a picture of their friends, family, or pet.
- Plan for a lot of bathroom and snack breaks - helping your children feel comfortable will make traveling much easier on everyone.
- Allow your kids to keep in contact with friends back home when traveling for an extended period of time - let them call, send letters, postcards, or e-mails to their friends.
- Do not force your children to endure adult activities such as long museum visits, formal dinners, or plays in languages they don't understand - rather, plan child-oriented activities like visiting parks, zoos, and toy stores.

The AAA also has a few tips to keep in mind that can help you plan for a safe and fun road trip, such as:

- Buckle up for safety; you'll avoid a ticket, and more importantly, should you get into an accident, you'll increase the odds of surviving the crash and reducing injuries for both you and your family.
- Get a good night's sleep - drowsy drivers can be as dangerous behind the wheel as drunk drivers. And don't think coffee or opening windows will be enough to keep you awake — there is no substitute for a good night's sleep.
- Take a break from driving if you feel yourself getting drowsy; get out of the car for some exercise or switch drivers if you have that option.
- Do not drink and drive - you put yourself and anyone around you in danger.
- Conduct a pre-road trip checklist on your vehicle - taking just 10 minutes to ensure your car's tires are properly inflated, that the fluids are topped off, and everything under the hood is all right can identify problems that could lead to future breakdowns — putting a damper on your vacation.

### **Resources Available**

The following Web sites are useful resources for helping to keep you and your family safe over the summer.

- KidsHealth: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)
- American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://www.aap.org>
- American Cancer Society: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)