Common Sense Rules for Summer Fun

Summertime invites us to let go, play and enjoy the great outdoors. But even if you’re picnicking in the backyard, sticking to common sense rules could help you or your loved ones avoid a trip to the ER. Keep these precautions top of mind:

Cook and store picnic foods properly. Separate raw foods from cooked foods. Cook foods to proper temperatures (for instance, ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees). Chill foods promptly.

Use a clean grill, safely situated. Keep it far from the house, deck and overhead branches—and if you’re camping, away from the tent. Never leave it unattended.

Buckle up everyone, every time, even Fido. Secure your pet in a harness or carrier.

Never leave children in unattended cars, not even for a quick dash to the drugstore! This goes for pets, too. Remember, even on hot days with the window cracked open, the temperature can rise dangerously inside the vehicle, leaving your pet at risk for heatstroke.

Keep a constant watch on your kids in pools or open water. Do this even if there’s a lifeguard on duty.

Protect Yourself from the Sun

Summer has officially begun, which means applying sunscreen should now be a daily part of your routine to protect your skin from the sun's harsh rays while spending time outside. However, deciding which sunscreen is best for you and your family can feel overwhelming. Here are a few things to keep in mind to help you pick the most effective and safe sunscreen:

- **Pick a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30** and be sure to reapply it at least every two hours, as well as after swimming or sweating. SPF only refers to protection against UVB rays.
- **Look for sunscreens that are labeled “broad spectrum.”** Sunscreens that are “broad spectrum” protect against UVB and UVA rays, which can damage your skin and contribute to skin cancer.
- **Choose water-resistant sunscreens** if you plan to do water activities or other activities where you may sweat. If a sunscreen bottle has the label “water resistant,” check to see how long the resistance lasts. Like all sunscreens, you should reapply at least every two hours.
- **Wear the right footwear and other gear.** Biking? Wear a snug-fitting helmet. Boating or paddle boarding? Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Walking or biking after dark? Add glow-in-the-dark or reflective stickers to your shoes and clothing, and a headlamp or other flashing light.
- **Take a buddy when venturing into isolated areas.** This is important whether you're taking a dip at an unguarded beach or trekking forested trails.
- **Pay attention!** Don't text when driving, hiking, boating, etc. Check weather conditions and current water levels, for instance. Stay on designated trails and roads—don't go around barriers!
- **Don't drink and drive—in any vehicle.** Choose a designated driver.
- **Be sure to check the expiration date on leftover sunscreen and prior to purchasing** to make sure it is still effective. If you apply expired sunscreen, it may be as if you applied nothing at all.
- **Read the ingredients.** The Food and Drug Administration and Environmental Working Group recommends looking for sunscreens that include zinc oxide or titanium oxide. These ingredients are considered safe for skin as well as the environment.

Enjoy the beautiful weather this summer, but stay safe by taking steps to protect your skin.
Substance Abuse in the Family: What You Can Do

Having a family member—whether it’s your spouse, parent, or teen—who has a drinking or drug problem can create an unhealthy effect on the entire family’s well-being. Alcohol or drug abuse can spark arguments, money problems, issues with responsibilities, and may even cause isolation from friends and relatives in order to hide or cover up the problem. If you suspect a family member has an alcohol or drug problem, consider the following tips:

Speak to them privately as early as possible. Offer help and support without judgment. List specific examples of your loved one’s behavior that worry you, and urge them to seek help.

Avoid attempting to punish, threaten, bribe, or preach. Don’t use emotional appeals that may only increase feelings of guilt and compulsion to drink or use drugs.

Don’t hide or throw out alcohol or drugs. Don’t cover up or make excuses for the abuser, or shield them from the negative consequences of their behavior. Don’t drink alcohol or use drugs with them.

Don’t feel guilty or responsible for another’s behavior. You can’t force anyone to get help.

Remember to look out for your own needs. Talk to your health practitioner or a mental health counselor or seek support from organizations like Al-Anon, which is for people worried about someone with a drinking problem. You may learn ways to take care of yourself and how to set limits with the family member who is abusing alcohol or drugs. This can help you focus more effectively on other important matters in your life. By helping yourself, you may be better able help the person with the problem.

UV Safety Month

Read about how to protect yourself and loved ones from the sun’s UV radiation, provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.