



Keep It Cool

There is nothing like getting out on a perfect summer day for a cookout or an afternoon by the water. But summer fun can turn dangerous if you do not take care of yourself. Wear sunblock, drink plenty of water and be aware of the warning signs of heat stress.

Heat exhaustion

People sometimes use the terms “heat exhaustion” and “heatstroke” interchangeably. Both are heat-related illnesses, but heatstroke is a more serious condition that can be fatal without immediate medical care.

Spending time in a hot or humid environment can cause your body to lose an excess of water and salt, triggering heat exhaustion. Its symptoms can include heavy perspiration, nausea, dizziness, a headache, a rapid heartbeat and excessive thirst. Seek immediate care if you have any of these symptoms. Take off outer layers of clothing, such as socks and shoes, and sip water. Use cold compresses or rinse your face and neck with cold water.

Heatstroke

If untreated, heat exhaustion can turn into a heatstroke, which is what happens when your body becomes too hot to cool itself off. The body temperature of a person with heatstroke can reach as high as 106 degrees Fahrenheit. The symptoms of heatstroke can include:

- Hot, dry skin or excessive perspiration.
- Slurred speech or confusion.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Seizures.

If you are with someone who is having a heatstroke, call 911 immediately. While you wait for first responders, move the person to a cool area and take off his or her unnecessary clothing. Spray water or apply ice packs or cold compresses to the person’s skin. Offer cold water only if the person is awake and alert enough to drink safely.

Skin care

Ultraviolet (UV) rays are a form of radiation that can come from the sun or a tanning bed. UV rays can harm skin cells and can cause skin cancer, the most common type of cancer in the U.S. UV rays are the strongest from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and they can even cause skin damage on cloudy days.

To reduce your odds of skin cancer, be sun smart when you are outside. Here are some tips to remember:

- Stay in the shade.
- Wear pants and long-sleeved shirts if possible.
- Wear a brimmed hat that protects your face, neck and ears.
- Protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses.
- Always wear sunscreen when you go outside.

Be selective about your sunscreen. Check the expiration date to make sure it will work effectively. Choose one with broad-spectrum coverage for both UVA and UVB rays. Opt for a sun protection factor of at least 15.

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Drink up

There are many health benefits to drinking plenty of water. It improves our sleep and our moods, and it helps our organs to function as they should. It can help to prevent infections and maintain proper body temperature.

Hydration is even more important on hot days. Dehydration can lead to serious heat-related illnesses. If you are going to be outside in the heat, prevent problems by drinking water throughout the day. Try to drink 8 ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes, even if you do not feel thirsty. If you are properly hydrated, you should be using the restroom every two to three hours. Your urine should be light in color.

You will have more fun in the sun if you use sunscreen, drink lots of water and take good care of yourself in the summer heat.

