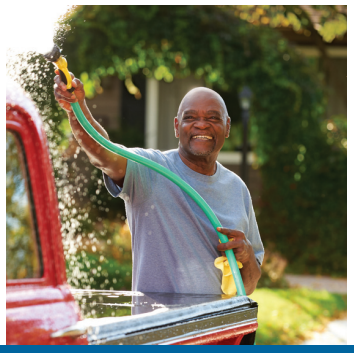

Summer Wellness

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- 8 Ways to Minimize Your Sun Exposure, Skin Cancer Worries
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- Fire It Up: 4 Rules for Safer Grilling

8 Ways to Minimize Your Sun Exposure, Skin Cancer Worries

Half of all cancers diagnosed in the U.S. are skin cancers. Minimizing sun exposure may help prevent some types of this cancer.

Video Spotlight:

Tips for staying health in the summer

Keeping kids hydrated

Did you know that the most common type of cancer diagnosed in the U.S. is largely preventable? It is estimated that one in five Americans will have skin cancer over the course of their lifetimes. Fortunately, being sun-savvy may help keep this often-preventable cancer at bay.

When skin deep matters

The skin is the body's largest organ. It protects us against heat, sunlight, injury and infection. The ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun and from tanning beds can cause skin damage that can lead to cancer. While there are many types of skin cancers, the three most common are melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma and basal cell carcinoma.

Melanoma begins in your pigment cells, or melanocytes. Of the three cancers, it is the most likely to spread to other parts of your body. Squamous cell skin cancer begins in your squamous cells, and sometimes spreads in the body. Basal cell skin cancer begins in the basal cell layer of your skin, but rarely spreads.

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8 Ways to Minimize Your Sun Exposure, Skin Cancer Worries (*continued*)

There are many risk factors common to these cancers. Sunlight is the most important risk factor for any type of skin cancer. Your lifetime exposure to UV rays is another factor. Also, tanning, or having fair (pale) skin that burns easily, ups your risk for any type of skin cancer.

Some risk factors are specific to skin cancer types. For example, one risk factor exclusive to melanoma is having many common moles — 50 or more. And old burns, scars, ulcers, or areas of inflammation on the skin may be a risk factor for both basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers.

Keeping the rays away

Following these eight tips may minimize your sun exposure to help reduce your risk of some types of skin cancer:

1. Put lotion in motion. Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Your sunscreen should be SPF 15 or higher. If you will be swimming, use a waterproof type. Generously apply it to all exposed skin. The sun can harm skin in as few as 15 minutes. Be sure to use sunscreen on cloudy days, too, because UV rays can go through clouds.
2. Apply sunscreen correctly. Be sure to put on enough sunscreen. The average adult needs about one ounce to cover their body. It works best when it's applied thickly. Apply it 30 minutes before going outside. Apply sunscreen on all exposed skin, including your ears. Put lip balm with SPF 15 or more on your lips. Reapply sunscreen every two hours and after swimming or sweating.
3. Environmental awareness. Be extra careful around water, sand, cement and snow because the sun's rays can reflect off these surfaces. Note that UV radiation is stronger at higher altitudes and in warmer, southern climates.
4. Timing is everything. Avoid the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is when the sun is at its highest and its rays are strongest. If your shadow appears to be shorter than you are, retreat to the shade.
5. Know your UV numbers. Check the UV index reported by the U.S. Weather Service through your local media. The UV index measures the amount of UV light reaching the ground and depends on the amount of cloud cover, time of day, time of year and elevation. The UV index ranges from 1 (low) to 11 (high). Be extra careful outside when the UV index is high.
6. Cover up. Wear sunglasses with wraparound lenses that block UV rays. Wear protective clothing when you're outside, such as long sleeves, long pants, shirts with collars, and a hat, preferably with a wide brim. Loosely woven fabric (you can see light through it) is not as protective as tightly woven fabric.
7. Avoid the tanning booth and sunlamps. Ultraviolet light from tanning beds can cause skin cancer. If you want to look tan, consider using a self-tanning product or spray, but continue to use sunscreen with it.
8. Watch yourself. If you notice any new or changing spots on your skin, see your doctor promptly. In general, the earlier skin cancer is detected, the more likely it is to respond to treatment.

SOURCES:

- National Institutes of Health. Cancer Institute. Skin cancer. Accessed: 06/24/2013
- American Academy of Dermatology. Understanding skin cancer. Accessed: 06/24/2013
- Environmental Protection Agency. UV index. Accessed: 06/24/2013

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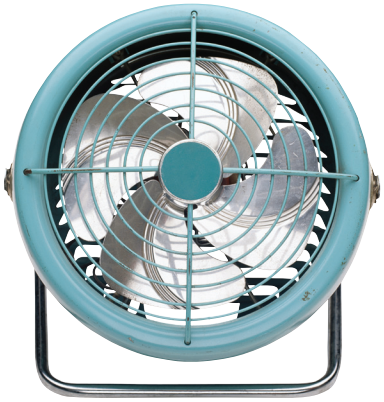
Preventing Heat-Related Illness

Follow these tips to stay safe when the heat gets too hot to handle.

Summer brings lots of opportunities for outdoor fun for many people. But when the heat gets extreme, that fun can turn harmful or even life-threatening if proper precautions aren't taken.

Most heat-related health problems are preventable. A few safety steps may help you avoid a problem in the first place. When it's extremely hot outdoors, you should keep these important tactics in mind.
Health experts say:



- Stay cool. Stay in air-conditioned areas as much as you can. Your community may offer access to air-conditioned shelters for those without the ability to stay cool. Fans alone may not offer enough relief. Avoid being out in the direct sun.
- Stay hydrated. You may need to drink more water than you're used to. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. Experts recommend drinking two to four cups of water every hour when working outdoors or being active outside. Remind others to stay hydrated.
- Stay informed about the weather. Outdoor fun requires planning, so stay on top of expected weather conditions and take the right protective measures to deal with any extreme heat. Watch for weather alerts on local news reports.

What other precautions can you take?

Avoid drinking alcohol or drinks that contain lots of sugar.

- Wear clothing that is loose, lightweight and light-colored.
- Take cool showers or baths.
- Avoid using the oven or stove to cook foods, as this can make both you and your home hotter.

Who might be at special risk?

People who are most vulnerable can include seniors 65 and older, infants and children, those with certain chronic health conditions, athletes and outdoor workers. Check on these people twice a day, or more often if you think conditions warrant it.

For some people, a buddy plan might come in handy, with neighbors taking turns checking on the other. Make sure they're protecting themselves against heat-related problems.

Preventing Heat-Related Illness (*continued*)

Questions to ask

- Are they drinking plenty of water?
- Are they able to be in air-conditioned areas?
- Do they know the steps to take to stay cool?

What to watch for

Warning signs of heat illness are not the same in everyone. Seek medical care immediately if you have, or someone you know has, symptoms of heat-related illness. Signs can include muscle cramps, headaches, nausea or vomiting. Other signs could be heavy sweating, feeling weak, skin that is cold, pale or clammy, or a fast or a weak pulse.

Severe symptoms can include a body temperature above 103 degrees F, skin that is hot, red, dry or moist, a quick and strong pulse, or possible unconsciousness. If these signs are present, call 911 for emergency medical assistance right away.

Experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have provided a helpful overview of heat-related illness and when to seek immediate help. Go to http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/index.html.

Scientists predict that as our climate changes, extreme heat events are likely to become more frequent, longer lasting and more severe. These occurrences should be seen as a serious public health issue.

Remember, preventive steps can help you avoid heat-related problems. Take care to keep yourself or anyone you know out of harm's way when temperatures rise to extreme levels.

SOURCES:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Extreme heat and your health. Accessed: 06/07/2013
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's hot outside! Accessed: 06/07/2013
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Warning signs and symptoms of heat-related illness. Accessed: 06/07/2013

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Fire It Up: 4 Rules for Safer Grilling

Stay safe and healthy when you light up the barbecue grill.

Barbecues are a favorite summer activity for many of us. But warm weather and unsafe cooking techniques can lead to food-borne illnesses. These illnesses are caused by E. coli, salmonella and other bacteria that thrive in warm weather. They can be found in raw and undercooked meat, poultry, seafood and dairy products. Bacteria can even be found in fresh, organic fruits and vegetables. To keep your summer cookouts healthy and safe, remember these four guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.

Clean. Wash hands and surfaces often

Bacteria that cause food-borne illnesses can survive in many places, including your hands, utensils and cutting boards, kitchens and grills. To prevent this, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with warm, soapy water, both before and after handling food. Also, wash all utensils, surfaces and cutting boards using hot soapy water immediately after using them. Rinse fruits and vegetables with cold water.

Fire It Up: 4 Rules for Safer Grilling (*continued*)

Separate to avoid cross-contamination

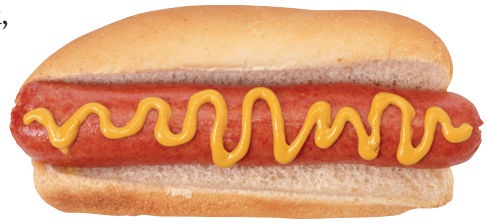
Begin with your shopping trip. Keep raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods separate while shopping, preparing, grilling and storing to avoid spreading bacteria. Never place cooked foods on a plate, surface or cutting board that has held raw meat or poultry. Use separate cutting boards and utensils during preparation for meat, poultry, seafood and eggs, and fruits and vegetables.

Cook foods to the proper temperature

Even though a burger might look brown on the outside, it may not be cooked completely on the inside. Keep a cooking thermometer handy while grilling and check the internal temperature before taking your meat, fish and poultry off the grill. USDA guidelines recommend you cook and grill to the following internal temperatures:

- 145 degrees Fahrenheit for fish, beef, pork, veal and lamb steaks, roasts and chops
- 160 degrees for ground beef and egg dishes
- 165 degrees for turkey, chicken and other poultry

Even pre-cooked foods like hot dogs should be heated until steaming hot or to 165 degrees.



After you take your food off the grill, use a clean platter. Also keep grilled food at 140 degrees or above in a warm oven or slow cooker. The possibility of bacterial growth actually increases as food cools after grilling. If you partially cook or grill your meat or poultry to quicken the grill time, put them immediately on the grill. Don't set them aside to finish cooking later.

Chill

Refrigerate or freeze cooked and prepared foods and leftovers promptly. That means within two hours or one hour if the temperature is 90 degrees or higher. Never thaw or marinate food by leaving it on your kitchen counter. When taking cooked food to a barbecue, place it in a cooler kept at 40 degrees or cooler.

SOURCES:

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC features: E. Coli. General information. Accessed: 06/20/2013
- United States Department of Agriculture. Food safety and inspection service. Safe food handling. Barbecue and food safety. Accessed: 06/20/2013

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