

## Summer safety

Summer can bring out the nature lover in even the least outdoorsy person. But between sunburn, mosquito bites and swimmer's ear, Mother Nature isn't always welcoming. By taking simple precautions, you can ensure that your fun in the sun lasts all summer long.

### Keeping cool in the summer sun

As we learn more about the unhealthy effects of the sun, having a tan is less appealing. In addition to causing premature aging,<sup>1</sup> sun exposure is the cause of more than 90% of all skin cancer cases.<sup>2</sup>

Always protect yourself with sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 before you go outdoors, and reapply every two hours, even if your sunscreen is water-resistant. Wear a hat, sunglasses and protective clothing to shield your skin from damage.<sup>3</sup> Be aware of any medications you're taking that cause sensitivity to the sun – many common medications, as well as cosmetics containing alpha hydroxy acids, can increase sun sensitivity and the likelihood of being burned.<sup>4</sup>

It's common sense, but never leave a child or pet in a car. Even on a cool day – and even with the window cracked open – the temperature inside a car can rise to a dangerous level very quickly. It's always worth the extra time and effort to take your child or pet inside with you.

Excessive heat causes hundreds of deaths each year. Temperatures above 90° put everyone at risk, but elderly people and very young children are at even greater risk for heat-related illnesses. Follow these tips from the American Red Cross to beat the heat this summer:<sup>5</sup>

- **Keep it light.** Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing to reflect some of the sun's energy. Protect your eyes and face with a wide-brimmed hat.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink water or juice constantly, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which can dehydrate you.
- **Avoid firing up your metabolism.** Eat small meals on a frequent basis, and avoid high-protein foods that increase metabolic heat.
- **Play it cool.** Plan any strenuous activity for between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. Otherwise, stay inside on the lowest floor of your house or building, out of the sunshine.
- **Be a good citizen.** During heat waves, check in on elderly neighbors and those who don't have air conditioning.

## Oh, those summer nights

Summer evenings can feel almost magical, filled with cookouts, fireworks displays, fireflies . . . and mosquitoes. To avoid the irritating itchy bites, as well as the risk of serious illnesses transmitted by mosquitoes, wear insect repellent containing a 10% to 50% concentration of *N,N*-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide (DEET), Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535.<sup>6</sup> Products containing DEET will also guard against tick bites, which can cause Lyme disease.<sup>7</sup>

Use caution around grills and fireworks, as well. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, nearly 10,000 people are injured by fireworks each year, and almost 5,000 are injured by charcoal-, wood-burning or propane grill fires.<sup>8</sup> If you're manning the grill, keep children away from the area and don't wear loose-fitting clothing while cooking. Ensure the fire is out before leaving the grill unattended.

The best way to enjoy fireworks is at a public display run by professionals. If you choose to light fireworks at home:<sup>8</sup>

- Light them outside, away from dry grass or leaves.
- Keep a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher nearby.
- Keep your distance from lit fireworks. If one doesn't go off, pour water on it and dispose of it. Don't pick it up or stand over it to investigate.
- If fireworks aren't marked with the contents, directions and a warning, don't light them.



## Resources

For questions about insect repellents and pesticides, call the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) at **800-858-7378**. Visit the American Red Cross for safety tips and video tutorials to help you brush up on your cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first-aid skills. Go to [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) for more information or to find your local Red Cross chapter.

The information contained in this flyer is provided for educational purposes only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your doctor for medical advice about changes that may affect your health and before taking any medications or beginning any lifestyle program. Some services may not be covered under your health plan. Please refer to your Group Certificate and Schedule of Benefits for details concerning benefits, procedures and exclusions.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency SunWise Program, *Health effects of UV overexposure* (December 3, 2009): [epa.gov](http://epa.gov)

<sup>2</sup> Skin Cancer Foundation, *Skin Cancer Facts* (Accessed March 6, 2010): [skincancer.org](http://skincancer.org)

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency SunWise Program, *Action steps for sun safety* (December 3, 2009): [epa.gov](http://epa.gov)

<sup>4</sup> WebMD, *Sun-Sensitizing Drugs* (February 20, 2010): [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

<sup>5</sup> American Red Cross, *Beat the Heat with Red Cross Safety Tips* (June 9, 2008): [redcross.org](http://redcross.org)

<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Updated Information Regarding Insect Repellents* (May 8, 2008): [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

<sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Vector-Borne Infectious Diseases, *Lyme Disease* (December 17, 2009): [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Fire Administration, *Summer Fire Safety* (June 26, 2008): [usfa.dhs.gov](http://usfa.dhs.gov)

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