



# *10 Summer Safety Tips*

Summer is here, and finally we get to take a break and enjoy life in the warm weather. But before you kick back and relax, read the following safety tips to ensure your vacation doesn't include a trip to the emergency room.

## **Sun**

Sunscreen is the most important precaution you can take during the summer months. Look for one that blocks both UVA and UVB rays. An SPF of 15 keeps you burn-free for 15 times longer than if you hadn't used sunscreen (for example, if you start to turn red after 10 minutes, you will be protected for 150 minutes, or 2 1/2 hours). Always reapply after swimming or playing sports, even if the bottle says water-resistant. Now you can find SPF 30 and higher in spray-on versions to make reapplying easier.

## **Bugs**

Make a habit of checking your kids, pets, and yourself for ticks and mosquitoes while outside and before going in. Light-colored clothing may cut down on bites, while anti-inflammatory medicines, Calamine lotion, and cold washcloths are all good ways to treat them. Check soda cans before taking a sip so you won't surprise any bugs (especially bees) that may be hiding in them.

## **Backyard**

Look up pictures of poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac online so you will be able to recognize them when you are outside. Stay out of thick woods and unfamiliar places if you suspect these plants may be lurking nearby.

## **Heat**

Heat exhaustion occurs when your body overheats from extensive exercise in hot weather, while heat stroke can happen when your brain's cooling system shuts down and your internal temperature rises too high. Signs of heat stroke that may require medical attention are dizziness, nausea, chest pains, and confusion. If you plan to be outside for a long time, bring plenty of water and sports drinks to replace salt lost through sweating, and find a shady area to escape the sun. Never leave kids and pets in a hot car, which can cause heat stroke, dehydration, and sometimes death.

## **Protection**

Wear adequate protection like knee pads and helmets when skateboarding, rollerblading, or biking to significantly reduce the chance of serious injury. If you're a walker or runner, avoid the hottest part of the day, when you could get heat exhaustion. Always plan your routes ahead of time and tell someone where you are going.



### **Food**

When in doubt, throw it out! Never eat food left out in the heat for over an hour, or on the buffet table for more than two. Always refrigerate cold foods until serving time and put them back as soon as you are done eating. Keep bugs away by covering dishes with plastic wrap or tin foil when you're outside.

### **Burns**

Fireworks are illegal in Massachusetts, but if you are going to be near someone who is setting them off, stay alert and watch from a distance. Fireworks are very unpredictable and can cause serious injury if they come in contact with anyone. Also, give your grills a good check-up when you bring them out for the season. Check tubes and hoses on gas grills for leaks, holes and sharp bends. Turn them off when not in use and keep children a few feet away.

### **Water**

Make pool rules before anyone dips a toe in the water. New swimmers should always have a life vest or "floaties" and stay where they are comfortable. Never swim alone or in the dark. Fence the pool area to keep unsupervised kids out and prevent liabilities. At the beach, pay attention to safe swimming zones and whether there is a lifeguard on duty. Make sure you know the depth of the ocean and when strong waves and tides are present that could trap a swimmer from reaching shore.

### **Germs**

Banish harmful summer germs by washing hands often. Carry a small anti-bacterial gel or lotion in your bag when going to public places with crowds. Petting zoos, carnival rides, public transportation, and the railings you lean on while waiting in line for that new roller coaster are all breeding grounds for germs and bacteria. At the community pool, wear flip-flops or water shoes, especially when using the restrooms, and watch out for leaky diapers.

### **Alcohol**

Summer is a great time for get-togethers and parties, but be sure to limit your alcohol intake. Driving and swimming while intoxicated are never a good idea. Be on the lookout for teens at parties and cookouts, who may use the opportunity to sneak something into their frozen drinks.