

INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW

SUMMERTIME SAFETY TIPS

It's that time of year again! The weather is warmer and summertime activities are right around the corner. Everyone loves to have "fun in the sun," but it's important to keep safety in mind during the summer months.

HEAT-RELATED HEALTH EMERGENCIES

There are a variety of health problems that can occur due to over-exposure to sun and heat:

Heat Stroke (Sun Stroke)

Heat stroke occurs when the body's temperature regulatory system fails and sweating becomes inadequate. This is the most serious health problem caused by too much heat exposure. Recognition and treatment of heat stroke are critical as death can occur if heat stroke is not promptly and properly treated.

Recognizing Heat Stroke: High body temperature (106+), hot dry skin, strong rapid pulse, possible unconsciousness, lack of sweat.

What to Do: Call 911 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Move to a cooler environment, try a bath or sponging, and use fans or air conditioners to reduce body temperature. Do not give fluids.

Fainting or Heat Collapse

This happens when the body is not receiving enough oxygen.

Recognizing Heat Collapse: The person will faint and may be sweating excessively.

What to Do: Lie the person down and elevate his/her legs. Give plenty of fluids and sponge with lukewarm water.

Heat Exhaustion

Less dangerous than heat stroke, heat exhaustion is caused by losing large amounts of fluid through sweating. Symptoms can include fatigue, giddiness, nausea, chills and headache. The skin will be clammy and moist with a pale or flushed complexion.

Recognizing Heat Exhaustion: Heavy sweating, weakness, cold pale and clammy skin, weak pulse, and fainting and vomiting possible.

What to Do: Lie the person down in a cool place. Loosen the person's clothing and apply cool wet cloths. Give the person sips of water. Consult a health care professional.

Heat Cramps

These are painful muscle spasms caused by electrolyte imbalances and low salt levels. These usually occur when people sweat profusely and drink too little water.

Recognizing Heat Cramps: Painful spasms in the legs and abdominal muscles that may occur in association with strenuous activity.

What to Do: Apply firm pressure to cramping muscles or gently massage to relieve spasms and replace fluids. Consult a health care professional.

Heat Rash

This is one of the most common problems in hot, humid work environments that occur when sweat cannot evaporate off of the skin, either because of high humidity or the person wearing inappropriate clothing. If the skin remains moist for an extended period of time, the sweat ducts become plugged and a skin rash appears.

Recognizing Heat Rash: Heat rash looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters.

What to Do: Move to a cooler, less humid environment. Keep the affected area dry. Dusting powder may be used to increase comfort, but avoid using ointments or creams.

STAYING SAFE IN THE SUN

Too much sun can be dangerous. Everyone reacts differently to the sun's ultraviolet rays and people can burn in as little as 15 minutes. The National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention warns that ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can cause skin cancer. Even on hazy or cloudy days, the sun's rays can cause damaging sunburn.

- Remain in the shade whenever possible.
- Wear UV protective sunglasses and a hat to protect your eyes, head, and ears from the sun.
- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA/UVB protection of 30 SPF or greater). Apply at least 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply throughout the day. Remember to protect your lips with lip balm that has a minimum SPF of 15.
- Be familiar with the side effects of medications you or people for whom you are responsible are taking and take appropriate precautions. Some medications make a person very sensitive to the sun's rays.
- Try to stay out of the sun when it is strongest (between 10 am and 2 pm).

Protect Against Summertime Insects

Insects such as mosquitoes and ticks can carry diseases. If you will be out at night or hiking in tall grasses or wooded areas, use an insect repellent and check skin and clothing for the presence of ticks. Seek medical attention if bitten by a tick. If anyone is allergic to any insect bites, remember to carry an allergy kit.

Practice Water Safety

Wherever there is water, there is a risk of drowning. Drowning can occur in seconds. The following factors can contribute to a drowning accident:

- A medical condition such as a seizure disorder.
- A medical emergency while in the water, such as a heart attack, stroke or cramping.
- Use of alcohol or drugs, even prescribed medications.
- Water conditions, including temperature, clarity or hidden objects.

Adequate supervision and simple precautions can save lives. Take the following precautions:

- Swim in familiar waters where lifeguards are present.
- Be responsive to and anticipate changing conditions. If a storm is approaching, get out of the water.
- Always wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) when boating. PFDs must be properly sized and maintained to be effective.
- Observe all rules of the swimming area.
- Call for help at the first sign of trouble.
- Maintain visual contact at all times with the individuals you support.

Transportation Safety

In the summer, vehicles, especially vans, allow for heat build-up and do not provide sufficient ventilation even while in motion. NEVER stay or leave people in vans or other vehicles in the summer heat. If you will be driving for a long period, bring water for all passengers to drink during the trip.

Guard Against Food Poisoning

The USDA warns that food-borne illness (food poisoning) increases in summer months. Because of heat and humidity, harmful bacteria can quickly multiply on food. When this happens, someone eating the food can get sick.

Follow these simple steps to safer food in the summertime:

- Wash hands and surfaces often. Unwashed hands and surfaces are a prime cause of food-borne illness.
- Separate and cook. Keep raw meat juices away from ready-to-eat food. Cook meat thoroughly to kill bacteria.
- Keep cold foods cold. Food left unrefrigerated for more than two hours may not be safe to eat. When the temperature is above 90°F, food should not be left out for more than one hour. If you have any doubts, throw it out.

Contact the ISA Risk Management Division today for more information on these and other risk management services and resources. Call 800-622-8272 or email riskmanagement@siegelagency.com.