

Summertime Safety Tips

Written by Melody Mendiola
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In the midst of these summer months in Minnesota, it is especially important to protect against the harmful effects of the hot summer sun and to take extra safety measures around water.

Did you know that each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 9.2 million children aged 0 to 19 years are seen in emergency departments for injuries, and 12,175 children die as a result of being injured. Whether you are relaxing at home, exploring one of Minnesota's recreational areas or going for a swim, here are a few helpful reminders to ensure your comfort and safety.

Hot Summer Sun Tips

Overexposure to the sun can damage the skin and may even cause skin cancer. And, heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat rash and heat cramps are harmful conditions caused by prolonged exposure to excessive heat and humidity. The National Safety Council and the CDC recommend these safety measures, especially when heat and humidity levels spike:

- Use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and make certain that children are protected. Re-apply sunscreen after prolonged periods in the hot sun or after swimming.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your head, neck, face and ears from damaging sun exposure. Baseball caps provide little protection except to the face.
- Carry a long-sleeved shirt to wear in direct sun. For comfort, it should be light-colored and loose fitting, except when working around machinery.
- Drink plenty of water during the summer – sipping ever 15 minutes on especially hot days.
- Take frequent breaks in the shade or inside during the hottest times of the day.
- Recognize the signs of heat stroke: Confusion, or decreased level of consciousness, either profuse sweating, or lack sweating, fast heart rate, or convulsions (uncontrollably shaking or seizure like activity). Heat stroke is a true medical emergency. You must seek emergency medical care, and even with excellent care, many people still die from heat stroke.

Make Water Safety a Priority

While over 90 percent of families with young children will be in the water this summer, almost half (48 percent) plan to swim in a place with no lifeguard, according to a study conducted by the American Red Cross. It is especially important to follow basic water safety measures and to monitor children near water. The Red Cross offers these water safety tips:

- Swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards.
- Always swim with a buddy. Do not allow anyone to swim alone -- even when a lifeguard is nearby.

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- Never leave a young child unattended near water.
- Make certain that young children and inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets around water.
- Be cautious around lakes and rivers, where cold temperatures, currents and underwater hazards can be dangerous.
- Always wear a life jacket when boating.
- Avoid alcohol use around water. Alcohol impairs judgment, balance and coordination.
- Avoid swimming for about 30 minutes after eating.

Hennepin County Medical Center – For all Your Emergency Needs

In the unfortunate event of an emergency, Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) is Minnesota's premier Level 1 Trauma Center with many nationally recognized programs and specialties. Patients with minor acute illnesses, simple injuries, and other non-emergency conditions now have a fast track through the Emergency Department since HCMC's new Emergency Express Care opened on level one of the Red Building downtown. The Emergency Express Care is open 363 days a year from 9 am.m. to 7 pm.m. No appointment is necessary. For more information, call (612) -873-5555.

Put safety first in all your summertime activities, and make the most of these warm, sunny days!

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