



## Summer Safety – Summer Fun 2024

### 2024 Update to the 2023 Summer Safety Alert

**Related Document:** [Health and Safety Alert - Important information about Drowning;](#)

**Memorial Day Weekend traditionally marks the start of summer fun.** Below are some reminders to ensure everyone is safe and healthy while enjoying the numerous activities that the summer weather allows. These tips provide general guidance to prevent risk associated with summer conditions. It is also important to provide care specific to each individual based on their individualized needs and circumstances.

### Sun Safety

**RISKS:** Too much sun is unhealthy. It can cause sunburn to skin in as little as 15 minutes and increases the long-term risk of skin cancer and eye damage. Even on hazy or cloudy days, the sun's rays can cause damaging sunburn.

#### **PROTECTIONS FOR SUN EXPOSURE:**

- Avoid direct exposure to the sun. Remain in the shade whenever possible.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with UVA/UVB protection of 30 SPF or greater. Apply at least 15-30 minutes before sun exposure. Reapply frequently throughout the day (every 2 hours and more frequently when swimming/active). Don't forget the ears, feet, hands, and neck. Protect the lips with lip balm with SPF 15 or more.
- Wear UV protective sunglasses and a hat to protect eyes, ears, and head.
- Avoid being in the sun when the sun's rays are strongest, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Some medications cause people to be very sensitive to sun exposure, such as antihistamines, antibiotics, antipsychotics, antidepressants, cardiovascular drugs, or oral medications for diabetes. Know who takes such medications and take any necessary precautions.
- Do your best to encourage sun safety when individuals will be participating in activities (e.g., camp, family visits) without agency staff supervision by providing protective supplies and clothing.
- If an individual appears to have sunburn, contact the RN for guidance (for those served in a certified setting). If blistering is apparent, contact the physician.
- Additional information about protection from sun exposure is available from the American Cancer Society at the following link:

[Be Safe in the Sun | Sun and UV Exposure \(cancer.org\)](#)  
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/sun-and-uv.html>

## Prevent Heat-Related Illnesses

**RISKS:** People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to cool down, especially in high temperatures and high humidity. This can make people seriously ill at times and could result in death.

### **PRECAUTIONS: Heat related illnesses and deaths are preventable**

- Agencies should activate heat-related plans of action when external temperatures reach 80°F and continue with implementation as temperatures rise.
- Individualized plans may also be needed for people at greater risk and with specialized needs. This may include individuals on medications causing sun sensitivity and/or those individuals who are unable to recognize or communicate when they are beginning to feel ill.
- Training should be provided to staff in the prevention and recognition of heat-related illnesses.
- Be aware of outdoor temperatures and modify or reschedule outdoor activities accordingly.
- Provide activities in air-conditioned areas when possible and stay in the shade when outdoors.
- Encourage hydration by drinking plenty of water/caffeine free fluids and water rich foods.
- If an individual requires physician-ordered fluid limitations, work with the RN and the physician to determine how to assist them in hot weather.
- Provide well-balanced, light, and regular meals.
- Individuals should be encouraged to wear loose fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing.
- Help keep homes/buildings cool. Close windows and use window coverings (blinds, shades, drapes)
- Be aware that fans alone do not provide cooling—they only move hot air around.
- **Vehicles:** Temperatures inside a parked vehicle can rapidly rise to a dangerous level. In only 10 minutes, the temperature can reach 118° F, with heat increasing as more time elapses.
- Do not leave individuals in a vehicle, even with windows down, no matter how brief.
- Establish a routine to be sure all occupants leave the vehicle when unloading. Check each seat for sleeping/reclining individuals.

### **TYPES OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES:**

**Heat Exhaustion** – a milder form of heat-related illness. Heat exhaustion can lead quickly to heat stroke, so if symptoms worsen or don't improve, seek medical help. Signs and symptoms include:

- Heavy sweating, paleness, skin may feel cool;
- Muscle cramps, fatigue, weakness;
- Dizziness, headache, fainting, nausea or vomiting; and
- Pulse rate may be fast and weak, and breathing may be fast and shallow.

**Heat Stroke** – This is a **medical emergency**. When a person's body temperature rises to a dangerous level, it can lead to vital organ damage and death. Signs and symptoms include:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103 °F);
- Red, hot, dry skin and absence of sweating; and
- Rapid, strong pulse rate, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea or vomiting.

### **IMMEDIATE STEPS TO TAKE:**

- **Contact 911 immediately** if heat stroke is suspected or a person is exhibiting extreme symptoms of heat exhaustion.
- Get the person to a cool, shady area, and attempt to cool them down with cool water applied to the skin OR wrap ice packs in cloth and place on neck, wrists, ankles, and armpits. Monitor body temperature, if possible.
- Give fluids if person is alert and able to swallow. Have them sip slowly. Stop giving fluids if vomiting occurs.
- Seek medical follow-up for milder heat-related illness as soon as possible.

For more information, please visit: [www.health.ny.gov/publications/1243/](http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1243/) and <http://noheatstroke.org/>

### Food Safety: Avoid Food Poisoning

**RISKS:** The USDA warns that food-borne illness (food poisoning) increases in summer months. Heat and humidity can cause harmful bacteria to quickly multiply on food. When this happens, anyone eating the food can get sick.

**PREVENTION:** Follow these simple steps to safer food during summertime picnics and cookouts:

- **Wash hands often:** Have moist disposable towelettes handy to clean hands of staff and individuals often.
- **Keep surfaces clean:** Unclean or contaminated surfaces are a prime cause of food-borne illness. Consider carrying soap and water or disinfectant cleaning wipes to use on surfaces when outside or at remote sites.
- **Separate and cook.** Keep raw meat juices away from ready-to-eat food. Cook meat thoroughly to kill bacteria. Use separate plates and utensils for raw meats to avoid cross contamination.
- **CHILL.** 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.**
- Refer to the helpful information from the FDA at the following link: <http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/Consumers/ucm109899.htm>

### Protect Against Summertime Insects

**RISKS:** Insects such as mosquitoes and ticks can carry diseases and their bites are irritating and uncomfortable. Some individuals are severely allergic to insect bites, especially bee and wasp stings.

**PROTECTIONS:** 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 you or an individual you support is bitten by a tick. If you/someone is allergic to any insect bites, remember to carry an allergy kit per their physician's recommendation.

### Safe Practice Near Water & During Water Sports

**RISKS:** 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 calm or rough waves, temperature, clarity or hidden objects.

**PROTECTIONS: Always provide adequate supervision and follow these simple precautions to save lives!**

- Know each individual's ability in the water before heading to the pool.
- Have policy and procedures in place at sites/programs that have a pool onsite.
- As indicated by the individual's Life Plan, one to one supervision must be provided to individuals with seizure disorders or those who are not ambulatory.
- A level of supervision and/or swimming safeguards must be identified and should be documented in either a person's Life Plan, Plan of Nursing Services (PONS), Staff Action Plan, or other plans of support for a person.
- Staff responsible for supervising individuals in the water must have the ability to assist the individual at any time while in the water. It is recommended that staff are able to swim when individuals are in more than knee-deep water. In many cases, depending on the person's needs, it is safest for staff to be in the water with the person to safely supervise them.
- Know the supervision and support equipment needs of the individual during water activities. When possible, swimming areas that are less crowded should be considered over more crowded swimming

- areas, as it will allow for easier supervision of individuals in the water.
- Swim in familiar waters where lifeguards are present, when available. Observe all rules of the swimming areas.
  - Watch for an individual being too tired, too cold, too far from safety, getting too much sun, or doing too much strenuous activity.
  - Be responsive to and anticipate changing conditions. If a storm is approaching, get out of the water.
  - Alert lifeguards to the special needs of individuals; ask lifeguards if the swimming area poses any special risks.
  - Before individuals enter the water, assess clarity and temperature of the water, weather conditions, and potential for overcrowding of the area.
  - Call/Signal for help at the first sign of trouble.
  - Staff must be specifically assigned to individuals and must maintain visual contact at all times with the individuals for whom they are responsible.
  - Supervisors should assess each staff member's ability to respond to water safety needs.
  - Always wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) when boating. PFDs must be properly sized and maintained to be effective.
  - Review Important Information About Drowning Alert (May 2024) which can be found at: [https://opwdd.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/02/psa\\_drowning.pdf](https://opwdd.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/02/psa_drowning.pdf)

### **Grill Safety: The Key to Successful Cookouts**

Enjoy the outdoor grilling that summer allows but be sure grilling is done safely and with safe equipment.

[General Grilling Safety Alert \(January 2020\)](https://opwdd.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/02/general-grilling-safety-hsa-1-2020.pdf) which can be found at:

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/02/general-grilling-safety-hsa-1-2020.pdf>

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