

Summer Fun, Summer Safety Guide

Ah ... the promise of summer: sunny days and lazy evenings, barbecues and picnics, getaways and good times. To make sure these times really are memorable, follow these tips while outdoors.

Sun Smarts

A great tan may look good, but staying pale is definitely better for your health since skin cancer is directly related to sun exposure. Your best defense is to avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. If that puts a crimp in your summer plans, put your second best defense into action: Apply plenty of sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15; keep your head and body covered in light, loose layers; and wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. While self-tanning products may provide the look of a natural tan, remember that they provide no protection from the sun.

If you do get a sunburn, apply aloe vera gel right away and take acetaminophen to ease minor discomfort. You'll probably be a little dehydrated, so drink lots of water.

Sting Savvy

If you or your child is stung by a bee, wasp or hornet, remove the stinger and venom sac by scraping it with your fingernail or a credit card. Do not squeeze. Wash the site with soap and water and apply an ice pack to stop the swelling. Be alert for signs of allergic reaction, such as wheezing, labored breathing, nausea or vomiting. Go to an emergency room should any of these symptoms develop. (If you or your child is allergic to bees, ask your healthcare provider about prescribing an emergency kit and keep it handy when you're outdoors.) To avoid getting stung, wear white or khaki-colored long-sleeved shirts and long pants, and avoid scented products.



Water Wisdom

Make sure a lifeguard is always present and keep a close eye on children in the water. Make sure all family members are wearing life jackets when riding in a boat.

Plant Patrol

The best way to avoid contact with poison ivy, poison sumac or poison oak is to know what they look like. The distinctive feature of poison ivy is that its smooth, shiny leaves always occur in groups of three. Poison oak is similar; however, it grows in shrubs and its leaves more closely resemble oak leaves. If you come into contact with any of these plants, wash immediately with soap and water.

Road Rules

A summer road trip is a tradition, but be careful not to overdo it. Take a five-minute break every hour to stretch your legs. The break will also help you avoid highway fatigue, a kind of hypnosis caused by driving long stretches of flat, empty road. If you know you'll be driving through desolate territory, keep a cooler with provisions in your trunk and make sure you have basic safety equipment, such as flares, a spare tire and a jack. And, of course, don't forget to buckle up!