

2008 Monthly ES&H Campaign: May

Health-The Summer Heat

Monday, 19th

The Summer Heat

Now that summer is almost here and temperatures are rising, it's a great time to enjoy the outdoors. It is important to remember that outdoor activities have certain health risks. A little extra care and planning can keep you safe this summer.

Protect yourself from the heat and Ultraviolet (UV) rays.

A little common sense goes a long way: Keep cool. Avoid strenuous physical activity, especially in the heat of the midday sun. Drink plenty of fluids, and know the signs and symptoms of heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Warning signs include:

- △ An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- △ Red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- △ Rapid, strong pulse
- △ Throbbing headache
- △ Dizziness
- △ Nausea
- △ Confusion

Seek medical assistance without delay if you suspect heat stroke!

To thoroughly protect yourself from the harmful effects of UV, take several actions to prevent sun burns.

- △ Avoid sun tanning and tanning beds
- △ Generously apply sunscreen and reapply as needed
- △ Wear protective clothing
- △ Seek shade
- △ Use extra caution near water (it reflects the sun's rays, and the coolness of the water can mask the sensation of a burn until it becomes severe)
- △ Monitor the UV Index and protect your eyes and skin accordingly (<http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html>)
- △ Obtain Vitamin D safely- although sun exposure results in the generation of Vitamin D in the body, it is much safer to obtain Vitamin D by selecting a supplement or fortified foods/beverages. For additional information on Vitamin D dietary supplements, visit <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamind.asp>.

Bug Bites

Bug bites can be annoying and itchy. They can also be serious if they bring an infectious disease like West Nile Virus or Lyme disease. Minimize the potential for bug bites and infection by avoiding wet swampy areas, using a bug repellent containing DEET, and wearing long pants and sleeves. For more information on the use of bug repellents containing DEET, visit <http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/factsheets/chemicals/deet.htm>.

Summer Driving

There is typically more activity on roadways in the summer months. Stay alert for children, road construction crews, motorcyclists and others. Here are some driving tips to remember:

- △ Check your mirrors frequently
- △ Always leave yourself an out
- △ Use turn signals
- △ Make sure other drivers see you
- △ Stay within speed limits (you'll stay safe AND save fuel!)
- △ Respect the weather
- △ Always wear your seat belt
- △ Avoid in-vehicle distractions (e.g. eating, cell phones, loud music)

Sources

United States Environmental Protection Agency

United States Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health

Visit the Communications ES&H website for more information.