

Summer Safety Tips

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It's the beginning of summer and people are naturally thinking about outdoor recreation and fun.

As an emergency physician, [Dr. Brad Uren](#) knows that seasonal recreation can sometimes end with a trip to visit him in the emergency department.

Here are some of Dr. Uren's quick pointers to help you avoid spending time stuck indoors in the ER, and more time enjoying the great outdoors:

Lather on the sunscreen and bug spray, and stay hydrated.

Long periods of sun exposure can lead to painful sunburns. In addition to the immediate pain, you are also increasing your risk of skin cancer. Use sunscreen, and wear clothing and hats that minimize your skin's sun exposure. Keep your family safe from bug bites by reapplying bug spray in accordance with the spray's directions.

Don't forget to stay hydrated, and help your body regulate its temperature by taking breaks and seeking the comfort of shade or air conditioning. Know the signs of heat-related illnesses, which can range from muscle cramps and fatigue to heat stroke, a serious condition marked by hot, dry or moist skin, a rapid pulse and/or confusion. Make sure to get medical help if your symptoms seem to worsen. And never leave children or pets locked in a hot car.

Be alert around water.

Safety around water is especially important for children because drowning can occur in only a few seconds. One of the best ways to keep your children safe is to teach them how to swim. Life jackets are also a good idea for young children in pools, lakes or any other body of water.

Never dive into shallow water or an unknown body of water. Hidden underwater obstructions can cause severe head or spinal cord injuries that could lead to paralysis, and even death, if jumping head first. When using pools and hot tubs, make sure the water's chlorine and bromine levels are correct, and that all drains are properly secured to help keep you and your family safe.

Monitor grilling and barbecuing.

Many people enjoy outdoor barbecues or picnics in the summer, but it's important to keep food at the proper temperature when outdoors. Keep cold foods generally below 40 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent growth of bacteria. Hot foods should be consumed quickly after cooking, so they do not cool to unsafe temperatures at which bacteria can grow.

If using an outdoor grill, be sure to check carefully for foreign materials getting in your food. Things you might not think of, such as bristles from a grill brush, can get stuck in your burger and be accidentally swallowed and cause injury.

Watch your family around campfires.

While campfires are another favorite summer pastime, the potential for burns, especially to unsupervised children, is high. Watch your children around open flames, and make sure they understand fire safety.

It's also important to be careful when starting your campfire. I have seen many burns as a result of individuals attempting to use an accelerant, such as gasoline, to get their fire burning more quickly. Take your time and use plenty of dry paper or kindling, or a commercially available fire starter, to ensure a safe start to your fire.

Exercise caution around fireworks.

While beautiful and fun to watch, malfunctioning or misused fireworks can cause significant injury or death. Ensure that you are following all of the instructions, and only purchase fireworks from a reputable source. Make sure the area where you are setting off the fireworks is clear of spectators and anything flammable. Have a fire extinguisher or bucket of water ready to put out small fires or to smother any "duds," and never attempt to relight a malfunctioning firework.

Stay up to date on severe weather.

Summer weather can sometimes be unpredictable. Floods, tornadoes and lightning are all threats that come with summer thunderstorms. Plan ahead. Have a weather radio, follow media reports or use an app on your phone to track the anticipated weather for that day. If severe weather is forecast, consider changing your plans. Be sure to seek shelter immediately in the event of lightning or a tornado warning. If you venture out, keep a close watch on the weather.

Summer is a beautiful time. With some planning, you and your family can enjoy the season and the summer holidays without injury. If we are needed, however, your local emergency department stands ever ready to assist you!

Check out more wellness and prevention tips at healthblog.uofmhealth.org.

Website: <http://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/wellness-prevention/6-need-to-know-safety-tips-for-summer-holidays>