



# Summertime Safety

It's summertime, and that means it's time to go outside and enjoy the weather. The return of warmer temperatures brings thoughts of freedom, relaxation, exploration, and being closer to nature. Whether you're relaxing in the backyard, turning up your garden, enjoying the pool, or exploring the great outdoors, here are some ways to help keep you and your family healthy this spring and summer.

## Summertime Food Safety

Nothing says summer like the smoky flavor of foods cooked out on the grill. When grilling, use a meat thermometer to ensure that you cook meat and poultry thoroughly. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F. Also, put cooked meat on a clean platter, rather than back on the one that held the raw meat, to avoid cross-contamination. Whether you're cooking out in the backyard or on a picnic, always keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. When you're finished eating, refrigerate leftovers promptly.

## Avoid Binge Drinking

Enjoying time with family and friends, outdoor grilling, and fireworks are all part of the 4th of July holiday weekend. However, sometimes the party is over before it starts.

Binge drinking, defined as 5 or more drinks on a single occasion for men or 4 or more drinks on a single occasion for women, generally within about 2 hours, is a dangerous pattern of alcohol consumption. More than 15% of US adults report binge drinking. It is most common in men, adults in the 18-34 age range, and people with household incomes of \$75,000 or more. Most people who binge drink are not alcohol-dependent or alcoholics.

During the Fourth of July weekend and other holidays, people tend to consume even higher quantities of alcohol, endangering themselves and others around them. Binge drinking is associated with many health problems, including:

- Motor vehicle crashes
- Drowning
- Interpersonal violence
- Unintended pregnancy
- High blood pressure, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases
- Sexual dysfunction
- Poor control of diabetes

In addition to the problems mentioned above, youth who binge drink may experience:

- Sexual assaults
- School, social, and legal problems
- Memory problems
- Changes in brain development
- Increased risk of alcohol problems

Don't spend the weekend in the emergency room as a result of binge drinking. Celebrate the holiday by keeping your family healthy and safe.

## Beware of Bugs

Warmer temperatures aren't just attractive to people, but to mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas. Mosquitoes can transmit West Nile virus; ticks can transmit Lyme disease and other serious infections; and fleas can transmit plague.



To prevent these illnesses, use an appropriate insect and tick repellent and apply it properly. Prime mosquito-biting hours are usually dusk to dawn, but ticks are out at all times. Young ticks are so small that they can be difficult to see, but both young and adult ticks hungrily look to animals and sometimes people to bite.

To keep ticks at a distance, avoid tick-infested areas (especially places with leaf-litter and high grasses) and use repellent containing 20% DEET. You can also treat clothing with the repellent, permethrin, (which protects through several washings) or purchase clothing that is pre-treated with permethrin. Always follow the directions on repellent packaging.

After coming indoors, shower as soon as possible and check your body for ticks. Make sure that your children also bathe or shower and get checked for ticks. Wash and tumble dry your clothing and check your pets for ticks. If you find an attached tick, don't panic, ticks are easy to remove with a pair of fine-tipped tweezers. Consult your healthcare provider if you develop a rash, fever, body aches, or fatigue in the 1-3 weeks following a bite. It could be any number of illnesses.

Pesticides, vegetation-free play areas, and landscaping techniques for tick-free zones can also help limit your exposure to ticks and other insects.

## Fun in the Sun

Summer at its best involves swimming and other water-related activities. Each year, millions of people enjoy recreational water activities such as swimming in pools, lakes, and oceans, as well as relaxing in hot tubs. Swimming is the third most popular recreational activity in the United States and the most popular recreational activity for children. The benefits of water-based exercise are numerous, but to enjoy a safe swimming experience, learn how to protect yourself and others from potential dangers.

If you've never learned to swim, now's the time to learn. And it's always a good time to learn CPR—CardioPulmonary Resuscitation—especially if you'll be supervising others. Always supervise young children around water. (Tip: stay close enough to reach a child at all times and avoid distractions such as playing cards, reading a book, or talking on the phone.) Drownings happen quickly, and usually silently. Avoid alcohol while supervising children and before or during swimming, boating, or waterskiing. Prevent water-related injuries and drowning by swimming with a buddy and swimming where there's a lifeguard. And always use life jackets and secure personal flotation devices—do not substitute air-filled or foam toys for safety gear.

When enjoying natural bodies of water, be aware of the local weather conditions and forecast. Strong winds and thunderstorms with lightning can be dangerous. Also watch for dangerous waves and signs of rip tides/currents. Also know and obey the posted warnings. For example, beaches often have different colored flags (red, yellow, green) to indicate beach conditions. Pay attention to lifeguards or posted instructions.

Protect yourself and your family from recreational water illnesses (illnesses caused by germs or chemicals in recreational water) by doing your part to keep germs out of the pool. Do not swim when you have diarrhea, don't swallow pool water, take a shower before swimming, and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Keeping germs out of the pool means a healthier swimming experience for everyone.

Prevent skin cancer. Avoid being outdoors during the midday if the sun is intense, use sunscreen with at least SPF 15, cover up with clothing, wear a brimmed hat, and wear sunglasses that block UVA and UVB rays. Be aware of the signs of heat stress.

## Around the Yard

It is now time to seal up, trap up, and clean up to prevent rodent infestation. As you're clearing out clutter, fill any gaps or holes inside and outside your home. Eliminate or seal rodent food sources such as pet food, bird feeders, and garbage cans. Elevate hay, woodpiles, and garbage cans at least 1 foot off the ground, and trim grass and shrubbery within 100 feet of your home.

In the yard, remove any items that may collect standing water, such as buckets, old tires, and toys. Mosquitoes can breed in them in just days. You can reduce the number of

ticks around your home by removing leaf litter and brush and woodpiles around your house and at the edge of your yard. By clearing trees and brush in your yard, you can reduce the likelihood that deer, rodents, and ticks will live there. Replace or repair torn window screens to keep bugs out of the house.

Gardening is a great outdoor activity for people of all ages. Stay safe and healthy as you grab your tools and head outside. Wear gloves, use safety gear when handling equipment and chemicals, protect yourself from the sun, and use insect repellent. Also watch out for extreme heat and know your limitations.

A sandbox is fun place for you and young children to play, but know that a cat sees that sandbox as a litter box. So, keep the sandbox covered to protect young children from toxoplasmosis, a parasite that people can get from contaminated cat feces (stool).

Pollens and air pollutants can be triggers for allergic reactions and asthma. Some experiences include nasal and sinus allergies and hives. Asthma can cause recurrent symptoms such as wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath and coughing. Stay healthy by properly taking any prescription or over-the-counter allergy medicine and having and following an asthma action plan. Wearing a protective nose and mouth mask, or even sunglasses or protective eyewear, while doing yard work could help to avoid the triggers that cause allergy and asthma complications.

## In the Great Outdoors

When you're out on the trail, whether hiking, camping, or hunting, protect yourself from mosquitoes and other bugs by using insect/tick repellent. Wear permethrin-treated clothing when practical. Check your clothes and body for ticks daily. If you find any ticks, carefully remove them with tweezers. The ticks that transmit Lyme disease are most active in May, June, and July, but check for ticks in all warm months to protect yourself against other tick-borne diseases.

Just because a stream's water looks clear, it doesn't mean it's safe to drink. Giardia and Cryptosporidium are two parasites that you can't see, but they can make you very sick, so follow healthy swimming tips. Always treat or filter water to make it safe to drink. Bats are fun to watch as they flutter around at dusk. In many camp situations, the mere presence or sighting of bats is common and normal. Sometimes, bats may be infected with rabies and may pose a risk for exposure to humans. Remind children to never touch a bat. If you are bitten by a bat, wash the affected area thoroughly and get medical advice immediately. Whenever possible, the bat should be captured and sent to a laboratory for rabies testing.

During Independence Day, remember the safety tips on firework use.

**Enjoy the great outdoors. Have a safe and healthy summer!**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011  
[www.cdc.gov/features/summertimesafety/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/summertimesafety/)