



NEWS

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Outdoor Summer Safety Tips from the Montgomery County Health Department

Norristown, PA (July 7, 2014) – While enjoying the summer sun, it is important to practice outdoor summer safety. Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun and tanning booths/lamps is a major risk factor for melanoma, a serious form of skin cancer. Whenever possible, avoid direct exposure to the sun between 10:00am and 4:00pm by seeking shade during those hours. The American Cancer Society also recommends their “*Slip! Slop! Slap! and Wrap!*” rules: *Slip* on a shirt; *Slop* on sunscreen (Broad Spectrum 30SPF or higher) and lip balm; *Slap* on a hat; and *Wrap* on sunglasses. Remember to apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going out in the sun. Reapply every two hours, and after swimming or sweating and toweling dry. Remember to protect skin even on cloudy or cool days. The American Cancer Society provides education and information about skin cancer on their website: [American Cancer Society Skin Cancer Prevention Activities](#).

While planning for a beach vacation or time by the pool, remember that teaching children basic swimming skills is a life-saving step. It is important to know that children are not the only ones who are risk of drowning. Children who are around water with a lack of barriers or without close supervision are at a higher risk of drowning. Location and lack of swimming ability are a risk factor for drowning in all age groups. While some adults may know how to swim, there are some factors that contribute to the potential of drowning. The use of alcohol inhibits decision making, judgment, balance, and coordination. The lack of good decision making may cause bad choices such as swimming in restricted areas or not wearing a life jacket while boating. A final risk factor that many do not consider is health issues, such as seizure disorders, that can lead to drowning, especially in the bathtub. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists risk factors and prevention strategies on their website: [Unintentional Drowning: Get the Facts](#).

People lead busy lives and can lose focus on what is important. They run from home to school to work almost automatically. Even when in a rush, remember that it is never safe to leave a child unattended

in a car, not even for a minute. The internal temperature of a car rises 20 degrees Fahrenheit in 10 minutes and young children can die from heatstroke quickly. Even when the temperature is in the 60s outside, the internal temperature of the car can reach 110 degrees. Children can die when their body temperature, which rises five times faster than an adult's, reaches 107 degrees. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers these [Prevention Tips to Avoid a Tragic Heat Stroke](#):

- Never leave a child alone in a car.
- Don't let your kids play in an unattended vehicle. Teach them that a vehicle is not a play area.
- Never leave infants or children in a parked vehicle, even if the windows are partially open.
- Keep a large teddy bear or other stuffed animal in the car seat when it's empty. Move the teddy bear to the front seat when you place the child in the seat as a visual reminder.
- If you are dropping your children off at childcare, but normally your spouse or partner drops them off, have your spouse or partner call you to make sure the children were not left in the car.
- Become vigilant about looking in the vehicle before locking the door. Always look front and back before walking away — always!

Pets are part of families too and also are at risk of heatstroke in cars. Like children, pets should never be left unattended in a car.

People love their pets and often want to show that love to other animals, whether they are familiar or not. Although animals may be cute, not all animals are friendly. Whether it is an animal at home or an animal in the neighborhood, animals can sometimes lash out and cause injury; especially if the animal is caught off-guard, teased, or played with a little too roughly. All animals should be approached with caution. Always ask the owner if it is OK to pet their animal.

Wild animals such as bats, raccoons, and skunks can also bite or scratch a person and should be avoided if possible. Animal bites from wildlife create more of a need to be seen by a doctor because these animals are not vaccinated against rabies and pose a higher risk of infection. Remember to always maintain awareness of your surroundings.

Most importantly, if you or someone you know is bitten, the wound should be washed immediately with plenty of soap and water and then the bite victim should seek medical attention from a healthcare provider or hospital as soon as possible.

To prevent animal bites and the potential risk of rabies, the following steps can be taken:

- Do not feed, befriend, handle, or try to make pets of wild animals or stray domestic animals. Wild animals should not be handled or kept as pets.
- Do not pet or disturb a dog or cat that is sleeping or eating.
- Do not tease or abuse an animal.
- Vaccinate domestic dogs, cats, ferrets, and selected livestock according to your veterinarian's recommendations.
- All domestic animals should be restrained and leashed when in public.
- After receiving appropriate medical care, contact your local health department so that they can investigate whether rabies shots are required and provide the appropriate recommendation to your healthcare provider.

For more information, please visit the CDC website to learn how to [Be Safe Around Animals](#).

Enjoying the summer with children and pets should be fun and exciting. Always be mindful of the potential for injury and how to avoid it.

Fireworks-related injuries are most common on July 4 and New Year's Eve. Fireworks can cause death and injury, including burns, contusions, lacerations, and foreign objects in the eye.

While celebrating the nation's independence or a fun summer night, always be careful around fireworks. Whenever possible:

- Attend public fireworks displays instead of providing your own backyard display. Each year, thousands of people are seen in the emergency room with injuries, mostly to extremities, from fireworks.
- Children are especially susceptible to burns from sparklers which can reach 1200 degrees.
- If you do plan to use fireworks, make sure it is legal in your area. Also, do not wear loose fitting clothing or light fireworks indoors or near grass. Always be prepared for accidents or injuries.
- Never try to relight a firework that did not go off.
- Always place fireworks into a bucket of water when done.
- There should always be a fire extinguisher, and someone who knows how to use it, nearby.

Have a safe summer!