

The purpose of this Health and Wellness alert is to increase the awareness of direct support professionals about common risks associated with warm weather and warm weather activities. By planning ahead and following some simple steps, you can help reduce the risks and make sure people you care for are having an enjoyable summer.

All DD Employees are required to be trained, annually, on identification and reporting of Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs) and Unusual Incidents (UIs) prior to direct contact. This training includes the review of any Health and Welfare Alerts released since the previous calendar year's training.

For questions or comments, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.  
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**Warm weather is here.** While the summer is a great time to be outside with family and friends, it also brings some risks. We hope that you will have a fun and safe summer by taking a few simple precautions to protect yourself and those we support.

Too much sun can cause dehydration, sunburn, and sun/heat stroke.

### Dehydration

Dehydration is the loss of body fluids and electrolytes due to profuse sweating and inadequate intake of water. Alcohol consumption aggravates dehydration. Some signs include:

- Heat exhaustion
- Headache
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Fainting
- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Urine output decreases, becomes concentrated and appears dark
- Sunken eyes
- Wrinkled or saggy skin –elasticity decreases
- Extreme dryness in the mouth
- Fever or temperature over 102 degrees
- Severe pain or blistering of skin

If dehydration is suspected, *rehydration* is the key to preventing further complications. Remember to drink lots of fluids.

### Sunburn

Sunburn is a painful skin condition, which occurs as a result of over-exposure to the ultraviolet rays of the sun. Risk of sunburn is higher for:

- Persons with fair skin, blue eyes, and red or blonde hair; be mindful that people with darker skin tones can also burn;
- Persons taking some types of medications (check with the Doctor);
- Persons exposed to a lot of sunlight; and
- Persons whose skin is already compromised

### To prevent sunburn:

- Avoid the sun between 10 AM and 4 PM
- Wear a hat (the looser the better) especially if hair is thin on top!
- Use a lip balm with sunscreen in it
- Wear muted colors such as tan



### To prevent sunburn continued:

- Put on sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes before going outside. Remember: You can receive sunburn even on a cloudy day.
- Try to stay in the shade
- Reapply sunscreen every 2-3 hours (more if swimming)
- Put on sunglasses with 100% UV protection
- Come in out of the sun when you first start to notice that your skin is getting pink

### Sun Stroke or Heat Stroke

- Sun/heat stroke is a **serious life-threatening** condition. It is the consequence of a series of events: It begins with dehydration. (Also usually a lack of sweating). If sun/heat stroke is suspected, get emergency medical attention immediately.

### Water Safety

- Assess each individual's capabilities/needs in different water sources (pools, rivers, or the oceans)
- Assess staff's capabilities in responding to water safety needs.
- Someone should always be designated as a "life guard" to keep watch for any problems.
- Do not chew gum or eat while swimming as you could easily choke.
- Use caution when swimming after a large meal. It is not recommended.
- Make sure the person you are supporting is using an approved life jacket or other flotation device, if needed.
- Watch out for the "Dangerous **TOO's**" TOO tired, TOO cold, TOO far from safety, TOO much sun, or TOO much strenuous activity.

## Summer Camps

Proper planning is important when individuals are attending camp. The following steps may assist with ensuring an enjoyable experience:

- Be familiar with the camp and possible dangers for the individual(s) attending.
- Know who will be supervising the individual and what experience they have. Be sure you are comfortable with what will be occurring.
- Communicate face-to-face with the camp director on any dietary requirements, supervision requirements, medical needs, or behavior issues. Provide a written copy of the information needed (e.g. ISP, Behavior Plan, etc.).
- Be sure lotion for sunburn and bug bites is provided or available. Be aware of any medications that increase a person's sensitivity to the sun and communicate this to the camp staff.
- If there is a pond, lake, or pool discuss the individual's abilities in the water with the camp director and any special needs that exist. Provide a written copy of those needs.
- Be aware of the camp activities and how they match with the individual's physical or health needs.

## Barefoot or Sandals

- Be mindful of potential injuries when going barefoot or wearing sandals.

## Outdoor Grills

Outdoor grills can result in burns if proper safety and supervision are not provided:

- Be sure lid is open before lighting a gas grill.
- Don't squeeze extra fire starter on coals when they are already burning.
- Check grills for proper working order.
- Supervise individuals closely when grilling.

## Food Poisoning

According to the Center for Disease Control each year, 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick from and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases. Here are some tips to avoid a trip to the hospital because the picnic food you have eaten was not properly stored.

- Be sure to refrigerate all food; don't let any of it sit in the sun; Use the two-hour rule – Discard food that has been left out of a refrigerator or well-chilled ice chest longer than two hours;
- Always wash your hands before eating; Be sure food is served on clean plates, and use clean utensils; Cover your food; insects can spread diseases.  
*Remember: "When in doubt, throw it out!"*

## Insects

- Bees, wasps & hornets can cause medical emergencies if they sting – know whether anyone is allergic and be prepared with what to do.
- For everyone else, it is important to remove the stinger promptly. Use a flat edge, such as a credit card, to scrape it from the place it is imbedded. Wash and apply ice. Deer ticks are tiny insects that live in low brush and can spread Lyme disease. If a tick is attached, get medical help right away.
- Be sure to use insect repellent when outdoors. If an individual has a tendency to ingest non-food liquids, you can purchase non-toxic repellents. While Insect Repellents that contain Deet are highly effective, they are also *highly toxic* when swallowed.

## Other Considerations:

- Always wear a helmet and protective gear when riding a bicycle, skateboard, in-line skates, horses, motorcycles and ATVs. Assure that the helmet is worn and that the neck strap is secured. Be a good model and provide appropriate equipment for all members of the group.
- Watch out for poisonous plants like poison ivy and oak. Seek treatment right away.

## Help avoid heat related illnesses by taking these steps:

- Maintain hydration with cool water and sports drinks; provide extra fluids at meal times
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day, more in hot weather
- Avoid caffeinated beverages and alcohol (both increase fluid loss)
- When outdoors, seek open, shaded areas, avoid crowds
- Use fans and air conditioning indoors
- Open windows at night when air is cooler outside to allow cross ventilation if no air conditioning
- During heat of the day, keep blinds drawn and windows shut, and move to cooler rooms
- If no air conditioning at home, go to a shopping mall or public library
- Take frequent breaks when outside in hot sun or from physical activity
- Wear light-colored loose-fitting clothing (dark colors absorb heat, loose clothing helps the body to cool); wear a hat and sun glasses
- Eat regular light meals to ensure you have adequate salt and fluids
- Take a cool shower or bath
- Be aware of individuals with risk factors for heat related illness; observe them at regular intervals.

## Other Resources:

Center for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/family/kids/summer/index.htm>

DDS Safety Net

<http://www.ddssafety.net/safety/summer-safety/summer-safety-tips>

Sun Safety Alliance

[http://www.sunsafetvalliand.org/safety\\_tips.html](http://www.sunsafetvalliand.org/safety_tips.html)

Central Ohio Poison Control Center

<http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/poison-center>

Nationwide Children's Hospital, 700 Children's Drive  
Columbus, OH 43205  
1-800-222-1222

## For Questions or Comments

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