

3 Ways to Stay Safe While You Enjoy the Summer



Precautions to take in the warm weather months

Hiking, picnicking, trips to the beach and backyard cookouts—nothing beats a New England summer. But if you're planning to spend a lot of time outdoors, whether for work or play, it's important to keep safety in mind. Sunny skies and hot temperatures bring with them risks of sun damage, dehydration, and heat illnesses. Here are some precautions you can take to stay safe and healthy while you enjoy the warm weather months.

1 Protect Your Skin

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S., with nearly 5 million people treated for it each year. Protecting your skin against damage from the sun's harmful UV rays is important year-round, but especially in the summer when the sun is at its most direct, and you're likely to be spending more time outdoors.

Use SPF 30 or higher sunscreen on all exposed skin, any time you're headed outside. Don't forget the tops of your ears and back of your neck! Put sunblock on any exposed skin on your head, too, and wear a brimmed hat if you'll be in the sun for an extended period of time. Reapply periodically, such as after sweating or swimming. Headed to the beach? Consider bringing an umbrella so you can sit in the shade. Your eyes can be damaged by the sun's rays over time, too. Look for sunglasses with UV protection.

One of the most convenient ways to see a dermatologist is with Telehealth Virtual Care provided by Teladoc®.¹ You can quickly get a consult via web or mobile app.



You may also want to consider scheduling a skin cancer screening and checkup. During a skin cancer screening, a primary care doctor or a dermatologist² will do a visual check to help find moles, birthmarks, or other marks that are unusual in color, size, shape, or texture. One of the most convenient ways to see a dermatologist is with Telehealth Virtual Care provided by Teladoc®.³ You can quickly get a consult via web or mobile app.

¹ For all fully insured commercial members (excluding Tufts Health Direct) and members of self-Insured groups that did not opt out; cost share may apply to some self-insured groups. If you're not sure whether your plan includes Telehealth by Teladoc, please ask your employer.

^{2,3} A referral from a PCP may be necessary for dermatology appointments.

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Stay Hydrated

When it's hot out, your body sweats more in an effort to keep itself cool, which puts you at greater risk of dehydration. There's no strict amount of water or other liquids you should drink each day; it varies depending on your health, the medications you take, and how heavily you perspire. But a good rule of thumb is about 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids a day for men and 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) a day for women.⁴ Any kind of drink can contribute to your overall fluid intake—not just water—but don't go overboard on caffeinated beverages, alcohol, or overly sweet drinks.



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It's important to recognize the signs of dehydration. The most obvious clue is feeling thirsty. If you're not urinating as often as usual, or your urine looks very dark, it's also a sign that you need to up your fluid intake. Other signs of dehydration include headache, fatigue, and feeling dizzy or lightheaded. Severe dehydration can include a rapid heartbeat, rapid breathing, and lack of sweat production. This is a medical emergency, and you should seek help promptly.

⁴ Water: How much should you drink every day? - Mayo Clinic

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Be Safe in Extreme Heat

Summer in the northeast inevitably brings a handful of heatwaves, when temperatures soar to ninety degrees or higher for several days on end. On extremely hot days, limit any strenuous outdoor activity to times when temperatures are at their lowest, in early morning and evening. Seek out shade and cool or air-conditioned spaces, especially at midday and afternoon, or cool down with a swim. (But don't forget the waterproof sunblock!) If you're visiting a theme park or other outdoor attracting, look for cooling stations, where you can take a cool-down break in a fine mist of water.

Dehydration is the most common hazard of extreme heat, but heat-related illnesses are other dangers, particularly for very young children and people over 65. Athletes and others engaging in vigorous activity in the heat may also be at risk. Muscle cramps, heavy sweating, fatigue, a weak rapid pulse, dizziness, and nausea are all symptoms of potential heat exhaustion, and signs that you need to cool your body down: Stop all activity and rest, move to a cool place, and drink cool water or a sports drink.



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If untreated, heat exhaustion can advance to heat stroke, a life-threatening condition that can cause damage to the brain and organs. If someone is showing signs of heat stroke—disorientation or an altered mental state, skin that’s hot to the touch, nausea and vomiting, rapid breathing or heart rate, or a body temperature of 104 or higher—seek immediate medical help.



At Tufts Health Plan, our goal is to help you stay healthy year-round. With some simple precautions, you and your family can enjoy a safe, fun, and memorable summer.