

“I like to be outdoors. Are there safety issues I need to think about?”

There are important, but simple tips to help you stay safe.



Many people look forward to summer, as it is usually a great time to go to the beach, spend the day hiking or get some much-needed yard work done. The following tips will help you safely enjoy your summer with your family and friends.

Sunscreen and sun damage

We often underestimate how powerful the sun can be. Without proper protection, the UV (ultraviolet) rays that the sun emits can not only cause sunburns, but also wrinkles and skin cancer. Protection is fairly simple:

- **Find shade.** If you are at the beach or in your yard, use a pop-up tent or umbrella to block the sun. If you're working outside, try to work in shaded areas. Also, plan your indoor activities for mid-day, when the UV rays are the strongest.
- **Use sunscreen.** You should use broad spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15. Put on a layer of sunscreen, 15 minutes before going outside, on all exposed skin. Do this even on cloudy days, as UV rays can still penetrate the clouds. Remember to reapply after two hours of sun exposure, and if you perspire or swim.
- **Wear plenty of clothing.** When out in the sun, wear clothing to protect as much skin as possible. The ideal sun-protective fabrics are lightweight, comfortable and protect against exposure, even when wet.
- **Don't forget your eyes!** Wear sunglasses that block UV rays. Look for "UVA and UVB protection" on the label before you buy them.
- **Cover your head.** Wear a hat with a full brim that goes all the way around. This will protect your ears, face and neck. At the very least, a baseball hat will offer some protection.

Ticks and Lyme disease

You may have noticed the increase in tick population in recent years. You can take precautions to limit yourself, your family and your pets from getting bitten and potentially exposed to a variety of diseases, but most commonly, Lyme disease. Lyme disease is a serious condition that can cause permanent damage if not treated properly.

- **Know your surroundings.** Ticks usually live in tall grass, bushes or the woods. Mow your lawn on a regular basis, and keep your yard free from leaves and brush. If you are hiking in the woods, find a trail that is well kept and clear.
- **Dress appropriately.** Wear a hat, long sleeves and long pants. You can also use insect repellents that contain DEET products. Protecting your clothing and gear with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin is another option. This protection can last through several washes.



- **Perform a “tick check.”** When you get inside, check your clothes for ticks. Don’t forget to check your children and pets! If you find a tick, put it in a bag, seal it tightly and throw it away. You can also flush it down the toilet. To be extra cautious, you can put your clothes in the dryer for 10 minutes on high heat. This will kill any remaining ticks. Next, you want to examine your body. Ticks can be anywhere, but the most common areas are:
 - Behind knees and between legs
 - Under arms
 - In or around hair and ears
 - Around the waist
- **Remove tick immediately.** If you do find a tick that is in the process of biting, use tweezers to grab it as close to your skin as possible, and gently pull upwards. Do not twist or yank. For the next couple of weeks, keep an eye on the bite. If you notice a rash or develop a fever, call your doctor as soon as possible.

Hydration and exercise

If you exercise outdoors, it’s important to do so safely and hydrate properly.

- **Check the weather.** If it’s going to be a particularly hot day, schedule your workout in the morning or evening, when the temperature will most likely be cooler, and the sun will not be at its peak.
- **Proper clothing.** Wear clothing that is lightweight and comfortable. There are also some materials specifically made for exercise that absorb perspiration away from your body and keep you cool.
- **Hydrate.** The average person loses one-to-two liters of water each day, and that increases when the temperature rises. Hydrate throughout the day, as well as before and after your workout. You can get some hydration from fresh fruits and vegetables, but your main source should be from water.
- **Know the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.** If you start to feel dizzy, nauseous, weak, crampy or your skin feels cool to the touch, you may be experiencing heat exhaustion. If you feel any of these symptoms:
 - Stop your workout immediately, and go indoors or find shade.
 - Remove any tight fitting clothing.
 - Lie down and elevate your legs, if possible.
 - Drink plenty of cold water.
 - If symptoms don’t go away within an hour, call your doctor. If symptoms continue to get worse, call 911. You may be experiencing heat stroke, a very serious condition.

For more information about staying safe outdoors, visit fallonhealth.org, and click Healthwise® Knowledgebase under Quick links.

