

Cook County Health & Hospitals System
(formerly Cook County Bureau of Health Services)

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For Immediate Release: June 30, 2009
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Cook County Department of Public Health Officials urge residents to take precautions while enjoying the Fourth of July and other Summer activities
Tips to keeping safety a priority!

"Summer months can bring great family fun with fireworks, picnics, swimming and all sorts of outdoor activities," CCDPH COO Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H. said. "Follow our recommended safety tips and you'll keep you and your family safe during all your summertime fun."

Fireworks safety:

- Parents need to warn their children about playing with flammable items. Sparklers burn at 1,800 degrees F, hot enough to melt gold.
- 13,000 emergency room visits are reported yearly from improper handling of fireworks. Loss of fingers and eyes, and facial burns are the most common preventable injuries.
- View fireworks safely at one of the many displays at park districts and community centers.

Warm weather safety:

Heat exhaustion can result when too much time is spent in a very warm environment, resulting in excessive sweating without adequate fluid and electrolyte replacement (salt and minerals). Heat stroke can result from overexposure to direct sunlight, or to very high temperatures. Seek medical assistance if a person has an extremely high body temperature (above 103 F), red, hot and dry skin, rapid pulse, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea and confusion. If heat stroke is present, find a cool place--preferably an air-conditioned setting--loosen the clothing, put the person in a semi-sitting position, and bathe the head and body with cold water. Death or permanent disability can result if medical attention is not sought promptly.

CCDPH recommendations:

- Drink 1 to 1-1/2 quarts of fluid daily to prevent dehydration. Water, fruit juices and juice drinks are the best choices. Avoid alcohol and caffeine because they dehydrate the body.
- Avoid salt tablets and highly salted foods.
- Plan activities for the coolest part of the day - before noon or in the evening.
- Wear light colored, lightweight clothing. If you must go outside during the hottest part of the day, wear a hat.
- Use a sun screen with a sun protection factor (SPF) greater than 15 to protect yourself from sunburn.
- While outdoors, rest frequently in a shady area.
- Check frequently on ill family members, the elderly and neighbors.
- **Never** leave children, the elderly or pets in a parked car, not even for a few minutes. Brain damage or death can occur from the rapid rise of temperature inside the vehicle.

Food Safety:

Picnics are part of summertime fun, but illness should not be. Food safety when picnicking should be a number one priority:

- Always wash hands thoroughly before preparing food and after handling raw meats. Scrub fruits and vegetables, too.
- Avoid cross-contaminating foods by keeping each item separate. Wrap foods well.
- Keep food chilled. Don't take food out of the refrigerator until it's time to leave for the picnic. Stock a cooler with plenty of ice and maintain a temperature of 40 degrees F. Replenish ice as necessary.
- Cook or grill food properly. Make sure you bring a thermometer along to check on temperature. To insure bacteria is destroyed, cook hamburgers to an internal temperature of 160 degrees F, ground poultry to 165 degrees F and poultry parts to 180 degrees F. Never partially cook food for later use.
- Put leftover perishable items back into the cooler immediately after grilling or serving. Food should never be left outside for more than an hour. When in doubt, throw it out.

Water Safety:

Swimming can be a deadly summer activity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drownings are the leading cause of injury death for young children ages 1 to 4, and three children die every day as a result of drowning.

- Always provide adult supervision while children are in or around water. Seventy-five percent of all preschoolers who drown are missing from sight for less than five minutes.
- While learning to swim is important for children, never rely solely on swimming lessons, life preservers or other equipment to keep a child safe.
- Remember that lifeguards are on duty to respond to emergencies, not to supervise children.
- Maintain gates and fences around residential pools.
- Take a class and become certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Bike, skateboard and inline skating safety:

Cyclers and skaters can easily protect themselves from the dangers of their sports by: checking for faulty equipment, wearing proper safety gear and obeying traffic laws.

- Medical professionals agree that helmets can save lives. Every sport has specific guidelines for appropriate protective gear. Buy a helmet with adjustable pads and straps that fits well even prior to adjustments. Arrange the pads and straps for a snug fit.
- Wrist guards and elbow and knee pads also greatly reduce injuries related to falls.
- Watch out for others: skaters, joggers, cyclists and automobiles all share park trails and streets. Always stay on the right side of trails and paths and obey regular traffic laws while riding in the street: look left-right-left when crossing and whether on a trail or in the street, always pass on the left.

For more information, please contact the Cook County Department of Public Health at 708-492-2000.

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