

As the mercury rises, follow these 5 summer survival tips

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As the days get longer and the temperature rises, summer is an ideal time to enjoy outdoor activities. Following some simple advice can increase the odds you'll surf through the season without so much as a sunburn.

Mind the latest pandemic rules

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently updated its mask guidance, permitting fully vaccinated people to go maskless in most settings and to stop physical distancing unless required by other laws, rules and regulations, or workplace guidance.

"The risk for vaccinated people gathering with other vaccinated people is extremely low," said Dr. Michael R. Sayre, a professor of emergency medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle.

"If you're going to a gigantic outdoor concert, different rules apply, because you just don't know the other people, and whether they're actually vaccinated or not," said Sayre, who also the Seattle Fire Department's medical director.

As for that summer vacation? The CDC now says fully vaccinated people may travel within the United States, although wearing a mask is still required on planes, trains and other forms of public transportation.

Avoid food poisoning

'Tis the season of outdoor grilling and hot afternoon picnics. However, feasting on improperly prepared or stored grub causes millions of cases of [food poisoning](#) every year. This can lead to nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and, rarely, death.

To minimize your risk of foodborne illness:

- Wash your hands, cookware and surfaces after handling or preparing food
- Keep raw and prepared foods separate

- Cook meats to the proper temperature
- Defrost food in the refrigerator
- Refrigerate perishables within two hours

Overall, the frequency of food-borne illness in the United States is low, "but having food poisoning is certainly no fun, and it can put you out of commission for a few days with symptoms," said Dr. Benjamin Abella, a professor of emergency medicine and director of the Center for Resuscitation Science at Penn Medicine in Philadelphia. "It's best to be avoided."

Practice water safety

Splashing around in the water is just plain fun. However, not taking the proper safety precautions can lead to tragedy.

From 2005 to 2014, there were about 10 non-boat-related drownings a day in the United States, according to the CDC. Another 332 people die each year from boat-related drownings. According to the American Heart Association, giving rescue breaths in addition to chest compressions is especially important during CPR in cases of drowning.

About 20% of people who die from drowning are children under 15. For every child who dies from drowning, another five are treated in the emergency room for nonfatal underwater injuries.

"Loved ones need to make sure their pool is not accessible to young children and that there's always an adult present when young children use it," Sayre said.

Familiarity with the water depth is crucially important as well, he added, noting that every year, [health care professionals](#) see diving accidents, resulting in spinal cord injuries, typically among teenagers.

"They are taking risks they shouldn't take," Sayre said, "because the brain's front lobe is not fully developed."

Stay hydrated

Drinking enough water sounds like the easiest thing in the world. After all, we have a built-in hydration detector known as thirst. However, as Abella pointed out, thirst is not foolproof.

"Folks who are elderly often don't have the thirst response they should and can get dehydrated without feeling thirsty," he said. "One has to be mindful of feeling dizzy, or unusually fatigued, confused or foggy-headed."

Dark-colored urine is another sign to drink something as soon as possible. Severe dehydration can lead to heat stroke, urinary and kidney problems, seizure and even death.

Abella recommended carrying a water bottle and sipping from it periodically throughout the day or whenever thirsty. "Plain old water is fine," he said. "It doesn't have to be an electrolyte solution."

Exercise, but with caution

Experts recommend limiting outdoor exercise to early morning or late afternoon, staying in the shade during the hottest part of the day and wearing a hat or long clothing to cover the skin.

Such measures also will help to protect against the ultraviolet light that causes sunburn and increases skin cancer risk. And don't forget to lather up. The CDC recommends applying a thick layer of sunscreen with a sun protection factor, or SPF, of 15 or higher that blocks both UVA and

UVB rays.

Exercise is key to health and well-being, but too much activity when the sidewalk is sizzling can cause potentially dangerous heat-related injuries.

People who haven't been active during the pandemic may need to go easy at first. "It takes weeks to months for your heart and muscles to get back into shape," Sayre noted. "Start slow and build up."

Muscle pains or cramps, excessive sweating and headache or dizziness are signs it's time to cool down and drink water. But if you begin to experience dizziness, confusion, nausea or vomiting, or a body temperature of 103 degrees or higher, it could be a sign of a heat stroke—a dangerous, life-threatening condition. In that case, it's time to call 911.

Though it's important to know the warning signs of overdoing it, Sayre said, the rewards of outdoor activity far outweigh any potential dangers.

"Do things that are heart-healthy, improve your life and help you live longer," he said. "Your body works best if you stress it a little bit."

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