

Safety Alert

Keeping Safe in the Outdoors



Hot Weather and Sun Safety

In hot weather, our bodies keep cool through the evaporation of perspiration and sweat. When the skin absorbs more heat than it can handle, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and other heat related problems can occur. The following tips are designed to prevent the most common summer health problems while on the job: heat exhaustion, heat stroke, sunburn and breathing problems.

- Drink plenty of fluids - preferably water. Drink continuously even if you do not feel thirsty. Also, avoid caffeine which will dehydrate you.
- Stay indoors when possible. If you have to be outdoors, avoid direct exposure to the sun. Seek shade or shelter at the first sign of heat exposure.
- Wear lightweight, light colored loose clothing. Also, wear a wide-brimmed hat outdoors or use an umbrella.
- If you have to be outdoors, use a water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.
- Avoid midday exposure. Here's a hot summer rhyme for you: "From 10 to 2, no sun for you."
- Do not be fooled by a cloudy day. Ultraviolet rays can easily penetrate clouds.
- On hot days avoid strenuous physical activity outdoors.
- Hot and humid conditions especially affect those with breathing problems like asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis. Keep a close eye on people with known breathing conditions and ensure that they are kept in cooler, dehumidified environments during the intense heat.

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke

Headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, a weak or rapid pulse, and cool, clammy and pale skin are all common symptoms of heat exhaustion. If these symptoms develop:

- Move the victim to a cool environment.
- Remove as much clothing as possible from the victim.

- Lay the victim on his or her back, with feet slightly elevated.
- Sponge the victim down with cool water, and use a fan if available-but avoid chilling.
- If the victim is not disoriented, he or she can have small amounts of water at a time.

Heat stroke is a more severe condition, and occurs when the body's cooling system shuts down because of the internal build up of heat. Victims will have hot, dry, red skin and a strong, bounding pulse. Headaches and dizziness may progress to a loss of consciousness. Heat stroke is a medical emergency and must be treated immediately. Call **911** immediately, and then move the victim to a cool place.

Protect Your Skin

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. The amount of damage from UV exposure depends on the strength of the light, the length of exposure and whether the skin is protected.

There are no safe UV rays or safe suntans.

Skin Cancer

Sun exposure at any age can cause skin cancer. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or have any of the following physical features: **Numerous, irregular or large moles; Freckles; Fair skin; Blond, red or light brown hair.**

Self-Examination

It's important to examine your body monthly because skin cancers detected early can almost always be cured. The most important warning sign is a spot on the skin that is changing in size, shape or color during a period of 1 month to 1 or 2 years. Skin cancers often take the following forms:

Pale, wax-like, pearly nodules; Red, scaly, sharply outlined patches; Sores that don't heal; Small, mole-like growths—melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.

If you find such unusual skin changes, see a health care professional immediately.

Lightning Strikes

To avoid the possibility of **lightning strikes** carefully monitor weather forecasts and adjust activities accordingly. Lightening can strike from a distance. If you are outside and you hear thunder, see lightning or the sky is threatening – **DO NOT WAIT FOR RAIN** – head for shelter immediately. When it comes to lightening and thunder, remember the axiom, "If you can see it, flee it; if you can hear it, clear it."

Insect Stings and Bites

To avoid insect stings do not swat at insects flying around you – stand still or move away slowly; when eating outdoors keep food covered and do not eat or rest near trash bins; avoid wearing scented products; and also avoid wearing bright colors, shiny jewelry, and clothes which are baggy or have flowery patterns. Try to reduce the amount of exposed skin outdoors by wearing long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and closed shoes. Take precautions regardless of weather conditions. Many insects are more likely to sting in gloomy and rainy weather.

- **What to do if you are stung:** See the school nurse, if there is one in your program. If not, scrape out the stinger with a credit card or a long fingernail. Do not use a tweezers or try to pull out the stinger. Wash the site with soap and water. For pain and swelling, apply ice alternately on and off every 10 minutes. Take an over-the-counter pain reliever to ease the pain of the sting.

Other suggested remedies which may be helpful are applying a paste of water and meat tenderizer (papain), or a paste of water and baking soda directly to the area. Topical or oral antihistamines may also be helpful to reduce itching, but you should consult with your physician. Get medical help as soon as possible if you feel dizzy, faint, short of breath or break out in hives. Also, always seek immediate medical care if you are stung in the mouth, neck or nose. If you have a known insect sting allergy and you get stung, immediately call **911**.

West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus is transmitted to humans by infected mosquitoes. To avoid infection with the West Nile Virus, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends staying indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening; wearing long pants and sleeves outdoors; and spraying clothing with a repellent containing DEET or permethrin, and applying insect repellent with 35% DEET to exposed skin.

Ticks and Tick-Borne Illness

Ticks can transmit Lyme Disease and other tick-borne illnesses. To avoid tick bites: avoid tall grass; dense woods and brushy areas; wear light-colored long pants, sleeves and closed-toe shoes; use insect repellents containing DEET or permethrin; check for ticks daily after outdoor activities and remove them promptly. **Do not** remove ticks with a tweezers, petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish or other products. Instead, grasp the tick firmly and as closely to the skin as possible steadily

pulling it away from the skin. Cleanse the area with an antiseptic and wash your hands immediately. Consult with your physician to determine if more treatment is necessary.

Cold Weather

There are three areas of concern when temperatures drop and are accompanied by wind and/or rain. Properly layered clothing is necessary to avoid the following:

- **Hypothermia:** When more heat is lost than your body can generate, hypothermia can result. Conditions leading to hypothermia include cold temperatures; improper clothing and equipment; wetness; fatigue, exhaustion; dehydration and poor food intake and alcohol intake. Early symptoms include shivering, disorientation and difficulty with both physical and mental tasks. Getting the victim warmed, sheltered and dry is critical as advanced stages can be life-threatening.
- **Frost Bite:** When exposed to very cold temperatures, skin and underlying tissues may freeze, resulting in frostbite. The areas most likely to be affected are your hands, feet, nose and ears. You can identify frostbite by the hard, pale and cold quality of skin that has been exposed to the cold. As the area thaws, the flesh becomes red and painful.
- **Slips, trips and falls:** Icy conditions and frozen ground are often contributing factors to falling. Use boots with good traction and take extra caution.

In all cases of cold weather ...proper clothing and staying dry are the key to enjoying the outdoors!

DISCLAIMER: This Safety Alert Sheet is being provided for educational purposes only and addresses common issues when working and playing in the outdoors. The basic responsibility for safety and health rests with the individual. Following the measures contained herein can help individuals to ensure their safety.

Although the information and recommendations contained in this Safety Tips Sheet have been compiled from sources believed to be reliable, the Office of the Nassau BOCES Safety Coordinator makes no guarantee as to the correctness, sufficiency or completeness of such information or recommendations. Other or additional safety measures may be required under particular circumstances.

**For more information call the
Safety Hotline 396-2400.**