

HEALTH AND SAFETY ALERT

SUMMER SAFETY/2026

Summary

Memorial Day Weekend traditionally marks the start of summer fun. Below are some reminders to ensure everyone is safe and healthy while enjoying the numerous activities that the summer weather allows. These tips provide general guidance to reduce the risk associated with summer conditions. Agency staff should still provide care specific to each person receiving services based on their individual needs and circumstances.

Sun Safety

RISKS: Too much sun is unhealthy. It can cause sunburn to skin in as little as 15 minutes. Even on hazy or cloudy days, the sun's rays can be harmful.

Protections for Sun Exposure:

- Apply SPF 30+ broad spectrum sunscreen 15- 30 minutes before sun exposure. Reapply frequently, every 2 hours (more frequently when swimming/active) covering all exposed areas.
- Wear UV protective sunglasses and a hat to protect eyes, ears, and head.
- Certain medications cause sun sensitivity. Be aware of any risks with the people you support.
- Provide protective supplies and clothing during activities like camp or family visits.
- If a person appears to have sunburn, contact the RN for guidance. If blistering is apparent, contact the physician.

Additional information is available from the American Cancer Society at the following link:
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/sun-and-uv.html>



**Office for People With
Developmental Disabilities**

Heat Related Illness

Heat Exhaustion

RISKS: Heat exhaustion can lead quickly to heat stroke. If symptoms worsen or don't improve, seek medical help immediately.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Heavy sweating, paleness, skin may feel cool.
- Muscle cramps, fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headache, fainting, nausea or vomiting;
- Pulse rate may be fast and weak, and breathing may be fast and shallow.

Heat Stroke

RISKS: This is a medical emergency. When a person's body temperature rises to a dangerous level, it can lead to organ damage and death.

Signs and symptoms include:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°).
- Red, hot, dry skin
- Rapid/strong pulse rate, headache, dizziness, nausea or vomiting.

IMMEDIATELY:

- Call 911
- Move to a cool, shady area. Attempt to cool them down with cool water compresses or ice packs wrapped in cloth.
- Monitor body temperature.
- Only give fluids if person is alert and able to swallow.

Avoid Food Poisoning

RISKS: Heat and humidity can cause harmful bacteria to quickly multiply on food resulting in Food-borne illness (food poisoning).

PREVENTION:

- Wash hands often: Have moist disposable towelettes handy to clean hands often.
- Keep surfaces clean: Consider carrying cleaning agents to use on surfaces when outside or at remote sites.
- Separate and cook. Keep raw meat juices away from ready-to-eat food. Use separate plates and utensils for raw meats.
- CHILL. Unrefrigerated food can become unsafe to eat in as little as one hour.
- Any doubts, throw it out.

Refer to the guidance issued by the FDA at the following link:
<http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/Consumers/ucm109899.htm>



Safe Practice Near Water & During Water Sports

RISKS: Wherever there is water, there is a risk of drowning. Drowning can occur in seconds. Know the risks associated with the people you support:

- Medical condition(s) such as a seizure disorder.
- Use of alcohol or drugs, including prescribed medications.
- Be aware of water conditions, including calm or rough waves, temperature etc.

PROTECTIONS:

- Always provide adequate supervision with staff specifically assigned to people requiring supervision
- One-to-one supervision should be provided to people with seizure disorders and diagnoses that can increase drowning risk (e.g., dysrhythmias).
- Know each person's ability in the water.
- Be responsive to and anticipate changing conditions.

- Ensure staff can immediately respond to an emergency in the water. It is recommended staff be in the water with the person for optimal supervision.
- Know support equipment needs for the people receiving services during water activities.
- Consider less crowded swimming areas to allow for easier supervision.
- Always wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) when boating.
- Review Important Information About Drowning Alert (May 2024) which can be found at: https://opwdd.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/06/psa_drowning.pdf



Grill Safety

Enjoy the outdoor grilling that summer allows but be sure grilling is done safely and with safe equipment.

Please review the General Grilling Safety Alert for more information:

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/02/general-grilling-safety-hsa-1-2020.pdf>



Insect Related Illnesses and Stings

Risks: *Insect bites (mosquitoes, ticks) can transmit diseases and cause irritation. Severe allergic reactions are also possible. Persons who are unable to recognize or communicate symptoms are at higher risk.*

Prevention & Protection:

Always be aware of each person's health histories, allergies, previous reactions and incorporate insect safety into care plans of people being supported.

Use repellents, wear protective clothing, be cautious around tall grass and wooded areas, check skin thoroughly for ticks and/or bites.

Be aware of those with allergies or hypersensitivity to bites.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Tick-borne: Rash (bullseye), fever, chills, fatigue, headaches, muscle and/or joint aches.
- Stings (Mild): Pain, redness, swelling, itching.
- Stings (Severe/Anaphylaxis):
- Difficulty breathing, facial/throat swelling, rapid pulse, dizziness etc.

Immediate Actions:

- **Tick Bites:** Do not attempt to remove. Contact a medical professional immediately upon discovery, monitor for symptoms.
- **Mild Stings:** Clean the affected area monitor for symptoms
- **Severe Reactions:** Call 911
- Document and inform an RN/physician

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Additional information is available through the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) regarding ticks and mosquito-borne illnesses.

Ticks:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/pests/tick.htm>

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/>

Mosquitoes and Disease:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/mosquitoes/#:~:text=No.,only%20certain%20kinds%20spread%20disease>



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For any questions related to Summer Health and Safety, please contact the Bureau of Nursing and Health Services at nursingandhealthservices@opwdd.ny.gov.