



WELLNESS WORKS....

at Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc.

A Publication from Brain Injury Community Re-entry Niagara's Wellness Works Committee

July 2009

A SUMMER SAFETY GUIDE

Is there anything better than a gorgeous sunny day? Nothing feels better than the warm sun on your skin, and when the sun is out, more people spend time doing outdoor activities with family and friends. It is important to be aware, however, that sun exposure has both positive and negative effects.

Positive effects of the sun include warmth (infrared radiation), light (visible light), and vitamin D3 synthesis in the body. Sunlight also enhances people's moods and kills pathogens. Despite these advantages, overexposure to UV radiation can also have adverse health effects, including sunburn, premature ageing, skin cancers, diseases of the eye, and immune suppression. Before going out to enjoy the good weather, make sure you are aware of the risks associated with prolonged exposure to the sun and the measures you can take to protect yourself and your family.

Everyone is at risk for UV damage, although some people can be more easily affected than others. There are many factors that increase your risk to ultraviolet radiation. You need to be especially careful of UV exposure if you:

- Have a fair complexion
- Have blond, red or light brown hair
- Have lots of moles (20 or more), several larger moles (5 mm or more), or a larger mole present at birth
- Have freckles and a tendency to burn, rather than tan
- Have had severe sunburns, especially during childhood and early adulthood
- Have a heredity disorder such as Xeroderma Pigmentosum (XP), Gorlin's Syndrome, or lupus
- Have been treated for skin cancer before
- Have a family history of skin cancer
- Have been treated with radiotherapy (for psoriasis and other skin conditions)
- Spend a lot of time outdoors (farm worker, gardener, lifeguard, and building site/construction worker)
- Intentionally tan via the sun or by artificial means (tanning equipment)
- Live or vacation in an area where intense sun exposure is common (high altitudes or tropical regions)
- Are an organ transplant patient and take medications to lower your immunity
- Are taking medications which increase your sensitivity to UV (examples: oral contraceptives, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, tranquilizers, anti-nausea drugs, antidepressants, and medicines for high blood pressure, heart conditions and diabetes)
- Have had contact with certain chemicals, including coal tar, soot, pitch, asphalt, creosote, paraffin wax, petroleum products and arsenic

Be sure to examine yourself closely on a regular basis to detect the early warning signs of skin cancer. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about the risk of any medicines you may be taking that could be harmful to you if you are exposed to UV.

Sunshine!



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Bugs!

Summer is bug bite season! There are a few strategies that can help you lessen the risk of bug bites and protect you and your family:

- When outdoors, use insect repellents that contain DEET or other ingredients registered under the Pest Control Products Act. Look for the PCP Act registration number on the product label.
- When using insect repellents, read and follow all label directions
- Wear protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, long pants and a hat. Mosquitoes tend to be attracted to dark colours.
- Make sure that door and window screens fit tightly and have no holes that may allow mosquitoes indoors.
- People can use both sunscreen and insect repellents when they are outdoors to protect their health. Follow the instructions on the package for proper applications of each product. Apply the sunscreen first, followed by the insect repellent.

To reduce the risk of swimming related accidents, the Red Cross recommends the following safety tips!

Swimming:

- Learn proper swimming and safety techniques by enrolling children in water safety classes
- Be aware of your limitations. Don't go beyond your ability.
- When swimming in the ocean, be aware of the tides and currents and keep an eye on the shifting weather patterns.
- Know the signs of hypothermia.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Fence backyard pools and ensure gates have self-locking latches.
- Communicate and post pool rules. Keep emergency equipment and first aid kits close at hand.

Diving:

- Neck and back injuries are common after diving incidents and can result in permanent paralysis.
- One of the major causes of spinal injuries is drinking and diving. Young men are at greatest risk.
- The majority of backyard pools are NOT designed for diving.
- Never dive into above ground pools.
- Think before you dive.
- Ensure water depth is at least 10 feet deep. Remember the depth of lakes or oceans can change due to tides or seasons.
- Ensure water is deep enough for the entire path of the dive, and that no rocks or debris are in the way. The length of a typical dive depends on a variety of factors, such as height of dive and size of diver.

Swimming!

"Peer pressure, even at a very young age, can also significantly influence behavior and encourage youth to act in unsafe ways. Don't allow anyone to persuade you to do something you think might be dangerous. Parents, trust your instincts and stay close to your children while they are in, on or around the water."

— Canadian Red Cross spokesperson, John Mulvihill



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Don't thump your melon. And if you do, make sure it's protected.

Why wear a bicycle helmet?

- Wearing a bicycle helmet has been shown to reduce serious head injuries by 85%.
- Thirty-nine percent of deaths from cycling injuries occur in children under the age of 15.
- Even a low speed fall on a bicycle path can cause a serious head injury.
- As of October 1995, anyone under the age of 18 must wear a certified helmet when cycling. **It's the law.**

When choosing a helmet, it is important to remember that there are different types of helmets for different sports and activities, because different activities lead to different types of injuries. So when choosing your bike helmet, make sure it is specifically designed for cycling (not hockey or football, etc.) to ensure you get the protection you need.

When buying a new helmet, check and make that the helmet has a certification label from one of the following organizations: Canadian Standards Association (CSA), Snell, The American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM), or the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). **A certification label indicates that the helmet has been tested to withstand certain levels of impact giving you the best protection that is available.**

Other things to help you choose the right helmet:

- Helmets should have adequate vents to allow for airflow to the head.
- Avoid helmets with extremely pointed shapes, inadequate or excessive vents, dark colours, thin straps and complicated adjustments.
- Make sure your helmet fits!
- When you place your helmet on your head, it should sit low. The brim of the helmet should be about two fingers width (1-2 cm) above the eyebrows.
- The helmet should not be tilted forwards or backwards.
- The chinstraps should go over both ears in the shape of a "V", with the ear in the middle of the "V". The chinstrap should be secure around the chin, with room for one finger to fit between the strap and the chin.

The Replacements!

How do you know when to replace your helmet? The natural lifespan of a helmet is five years; over this amount of time the material naturally weakens and will no longer provide you with the protection you need.

However, helmets also need to be replaced after a crash. Even if the damage isn't visible on the helmet, the inner lining may have been damaged or destroyed. And of course, visible cracks or dents mean it's time for a new helmet.

Bike safety is about more than just wearing your helmet. It's also important to choose clothes that are brightly coloured so that you can be seen by other cyclists and motorists. As well, pants shouldn't be too loose-fitting or flared, since the extra fabric can get caught in the chain. Since bikes are a type of vehicle, make sure you also obey all traffic signs and lights just like other traffic, and always ride in the same direction as cars do, not against traffic – try to use bike paths whenever possible. It is also a good idea to walk your bike across busy intersections and become aware of the proper hand signals, so you can signal your intentions to turn and stop to other traffic.

Finally, one of the most important elements of bike safety is proper bike maintenance. By doing regular inspections on your bike's tires, chain, handlebars, brakes and seat, cycling will remain a fun and safe summer activity for you and your family.

Bike!



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It's time to get the grill ready to go! Spend a few minutes on your BBQ and you'll have a cleaner, safer running barbecue that cooks food more evenly.

Make sure to give the barbecue an inspection. You should make a point of doing this every time you change a propane tank as well.

The Three-Part Inspection:

1. Spray soapy water on the connections, and supply lines. If you see bubbles, turn off the tank, and try re-connecting. If it still bubbles, then gas is still leaking. Shut off the tank and get the leaking part replaced.
2. Remove the grates and lava rocks, and check out the burner. If it looks good visually, then fire it up and make sure that you have an even flame throughout. If not, then replace it. Most burners only last one or two seasons, depending on how much you use your barbecue. Since you already have the lava rocks out, it is a good time to clean out all the ash and grease that's accumulated at the bottom of the barbecue. While you're cleaning, check the unit for rust, and any signs of deterioration.
3. Don't forget to check and clean out the venture tubes that deliver the gas to the burner. If they get plugged up, the gas will get diverted elsewhere, and could pose a hazard.

Whenever you barbecue...

- o Make sure that the barbecue is at least five feet (1.5 meters) or better yet 10 feet (three meters) from the house, or any other material that could catch fire.
- o Only open your propane tank a quarter to one-half turn. That's all the gas your barbecue needs to operate, and if you have a problem, then it's much easier to shut off.
- o Unless you're keen on joining the space program, always open the barbecue lid before you light it. If it doesn't fire up the first time you try it, then shut it down, and try it again in about five minutes.

A few tips for charcoal grillers:

- o Never use gasoline to get the coals going. Instead, use charcoal lighting fluid.
- o Let the lighter fluid soak into the coals for a minute or so before lighting it. That gives the explosive vapours a chance to dissipate.
- o Before you light the coals, make sure that you put the lighter fluid at a safe distance away from the fire.
- o If the coals start to die out on you, don't spray lighter fluid on the hot coals. You could end up with explosive results.
- o Always extinguish the coals when you're finished barbecuing. Here's a safe way to do it. Wearing oven mitts, take the coals out of the barbecue with tongs, and submerge them in a metal pail of water.
- o Always make sure that you keep your fire safe from children.

Barbecue!

HAVE A FUN & SAFE SUMMER!