



Summer Health

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The year was 1963. Nat King Cole released his recording of [Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer](#). Those summer days were carefree. We sat in the sun to get a tan. We swam in the local pool or the creek or at the beach. We ate hot dogs and potato salad. We didn't worry about anything! But our modern lives are so different. While we may still enjoy those summer days and nights because it isn't snowing, there are so many more concerns about taking care of ourselves in summer.

Staying safe, healthy and protected during summer is more important now than ever before. There are still opportunities to contract some of those "winter" diseases like [norovirus](#), [COVID](#), [RSV](#), [colds and flu](#). Protecting yourself from communicable diseases follows the [common sense](#) that we have always practiced. Just because it is summer doesn't mean we should ignore these steps like washing your hands frequently, cleaning common surfaces routinely, avoiding close contact with people who are sick, keeping your germs to yourself by wearing a mask and not shaking hands, and getting your vaccines.

One of the most common health problems in summer is dehydration. High heat and humidity can affect your body since 78% of your body is made of water. Dehydration can cause electrolyte imbalances, heat related illnesses like heatstroke, kidney stones and kidney failure and shock, coma and even death. A few [symptoms of dehydration](#) include headache, fatigue, dizziness, high heart rate and low blood pressure, and muscle cramps. To avoid dehydration, be proactive. Drink at least 64 ounces of water a day, and avoid soda, alcohol and caffeinated drinks.

[Heat related illnesses](#) are common in summer. Heat rash is a group of tiny, itchy bumps on your skin that develop when sweat gets trapped beneath your skin. Heat cramps are muscle cramps in your legs, arms, abdomen or elsewhere. They occur when you're exerting yourself in the heat and sweating a lot. [Heat exhaustion](#) happens when you lose too much water and/or salt. [Heat stroke](#) is a life-threatening illness when your body temperature gets very high. To avoid heat related illnesses, wear loose-fitting clothing, stay hydrated, keep your home at a cool, comfortable temperature, and find a place to go during hot weather like a mall or community center.

Remember when we all thought that the summer tan made us look healthy? According to the [Skin Cancer Foundation](#) there is no such thing as a healthy or safe tan. It is important to [protect your skin when you are outdoors](#). The first line of defense is to generously apply a broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30. Wear protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirt, pants and a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Seek shade when you can. Use caution near water, snow and sand since they reflect the damaging rays of the sun. Do not use tanning beds. Protect your lips with lip balm with at least SPF 15.

If I haven't taken the fun out of summer, remember that these are [just a few of the hazards](#) to our health during these warm days. Bee stings and insect bites (including ticks), drowning, unsafe summer foods, kidney stones, garden related injuries, foot pain and injuries, biking accidents, seasonal depression and seasonal allergies are just a few of the added hazards. By being proactive we can enjoy the summer months and remain safe.