

# Your Health

A newsletter dedicated to student health issues at Minnesota State University

Summer 2002



## FUN IN THE SUN

Sunshine feels great and might make you look great but it isn't harmless. Too much sun can lead to skin cancer, eye damage, wrinkles,

and allergic reactions. If you plan on spending time outside this summer you need to know how to best protect yourself.

To Protect Your Skin:

+Choose a tanning oil or lotion that offers protection from the sun's harmful rays. Look for products with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15.

+Put sunscreen on about 30 minutes before you go out. This will give your skin some time to absorb the protective ingredients. Reapply your suntan product every 30 minutes or more frequently if you perspire or swim.

+Try to keep moving. Broiling in one position, like laying on a beach towel, is the easiest way to burn.

+If you're serious about tanning and want to avoid a sunburn, try to get your tan gradually. Limit your first few sessions in the sun to 15 to 20 minutes. Increase your exposure slowly.

+The sun's most intense rays hit between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. The best time for tanning is before or after these hours.

To Protect Your Eyes:

Eyes are harmed by the same kind of rays that cause a sunburn. Long-term exposure to ultraviolet rays can lead to cataracts (vision is impaired or lost due to the lens losing its clearness). A great pair of shades can protect your eyes.

+Look for sunglasses that block 99 or 100% of ultraviolet rays.

+Wraparound sunglasses that block ultraviolet rays are great. They stop the harmful rays from sneaking around the top, bottom and sides of the glasses.

+Stay away from glasses that claim to block "infra-red" rays. Infrared radiation is just heat and unless you're a glassblower or steelworker you probably don't need sunglasses that block infrared rays.

IF YOU ARE TAKING MEDICATION, CHECK WITH YOUR PHARMACY OR YOUR PHYSICIAN BEFORE TANNING. SOME MEDICATIONS CAUSE SEVERE, BLISTERING SKIN REACTIONS. THE MOST COMMON CULPRITS ARE SULFA DRUGS, SEPTRA, BACTRIM, DOXYCYCLINE, AND TETRACYCLINE.

## QUIT BUGGING ME!!

Minnesota weather in the summer is the best around. The moment the weather warms up we're all anxious to get outside to play...and so are the mosquitoes, ticks, flies, bees, wasps, and lots of other flying, biting, and stinging critters. But just because we share the great outdoors with some of Mother Nature's most annoying (and numerous!) creatures doesn't mean we have to let them ruin our summer plans. You can still have a great time if you follow these tips offered by the American Academy of Dermatology and the American Academy of Pediatrics:



- ◆ Keep picnic food covered and wipe any spills immediately.
- ◆ Wear long sleeved shirts and pants that fit snugly around the wrists and ankles.
- ◆ Use insect repellents sparingly. They are safest if rubbed on skin or clothing. The most effective repellents contain the chemical DEET. Note: DO NOT use repellents, especially those containing DEET, on children under the age of one.
- ◆ Reapply insect repellent after swimming or activities that make you sweat.
- ◆ Make sure garbage lids are securely fastened so the contents don't attract insects.
- ◆ Stay away from pools of standing water (breeding grounds for mosquitoes).
- ◆ Avoid perfumes and scented lotions, soaps, and cosmetics.

Sometimes no matter what you try, you still get stung or bit. Any worrisome or unusual reactions (trouble breathing, swollen tongue, more than normal swelling or redness at the bug bite, etc) should be treated immediately. But run-of-the-mill bug bites can often be treated by the one that's been bitten.

- ◆ If you can see the stinger, try to removed it by quickly scraping with a finger nail or credit card. Squeezing the stinger or trying to force it out while trying to remove it can make the sting worse.
- ◆ Put ice on the sting to keep the swelling down.
- ◆ Take an oral antihistamine to fight off an allergic reaction and to provide relief from itching. Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen can reduce the pain of a bite or sting.






## FEELIN' HOT! HOT! HOT!

It's important to avoid heat injuries if you're active in the summer. Here are some tips to help you keep your cool:

- Adequate fluids before exercise is the best prevention. Drink 8 to 10 ounces of water, 10 to 20 minutes before beginning a workout.
- Warm-up! The warm-up gradually increases your body temp allowing your sweat to start.
- Take breaks to consume additional water (three ounces every 20 minutes).
- Wear clothing that allows sweat to evaporate (loose fitting, light).
- On very hot days, stay indoors or in the shade. Exercising in full sun increases your risk of heat injuries.
- If you become overheated, moisten your skin by sponging or spraying water to assist in the cooling process. Fans help, too!

••••• If you're into hiking and camping, part of being prepared is carrying a first-aid kit. Might sound kind of dorky, but it's just as necessary as your tent. A basic first-aid kit should contain:

- 1 elastic-roll bandage
- ibuprofen
- adhesive tape
- alcohol swabs
- antihistamines
- antiseptic ointment
- bandages, assorted sizes
- bug repellent
- butterfly bandages
- heat/cold packs
- wipes (i.e. Wet Ones)
- diarrhea medication
- gauze pads
- hydrocortisone cream
- unbreakable mirror
- tweezers
- scissors
- sunscreen



## Wheels in motion

Now is the time to get out your bike or those in-line skates that have been collecting dust since the Fall. But before you hit the pavement (literally!), here are some safety tips:

If you are biking:

- Always wear a helmet and consider protective eyewear (there's nothing worse than a bug in your eye when you're riding down a hill going 30 MPH!)
- When riding in a group, stay single file unless you are confident riding in traffic.
- Be courteous to motorists--they're bigger than you!
- Always be aware of what is going on around you. Keep your eyes up and focused on your surroundings.
- Make sure your bike is properly maintained.
- When riding with traffic, use proper hand signals so the vehicles around you know what your next move will be.
- Don't ride above your skill level.



If you are in-line skating:

- Always wear a helmet and give serious consideration to protective pads for your elbows, knees and wrists.
- Watch for spots with loose gravel, rock, or uneven road pavement. Road rash from falls on pavement rank right up there with other injuries like fractures, dislocations, and sprains.
- Wear proper socks--something that doesn't rub or bunch up and absorbs sweat. Blisters can be a major problem due to poor fitting skates and socks.
- Don't skate above your skill level.



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