



Healthy MercyCareTM LIVING

Summer 2019

A wellness newsletter for MercyCare members

Avoid these top summer health hazards

Extreme heat

- Stay out of direct sun.
- Drink plenty of fluids. (Avoid alcohol and caffeine.)
- Wear light-colored, lightweight clothing.
- Use hats and sunscreen for more protection.
- Anyone showing signs of heat stroke (altered mental state, not sweating, nausea) should seek medical attention immediately.

Swimming accidents

- Never swim alone! Even experienced or strong swimmers might need help.
- Do not leave young children or non-swimmers unattended.
- Sign up for swimming lessons—you are never too old or too young to learn how to swim!
- Do not jump/dive into the shallow end of a pool.
- Keep away from pool drains, pipes, or other openings to avoid entrapments.
- Avoid drinking alcohol before or during swimming and while supervising children.

Sunburn

- Apply sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher and both UVA and UVB protection before you go outside, even on cloudy days.
- Reapply sunscreen after swimming or sweating

- or after staying outside for more than two hours.
- Wear clothing, sunglasses and hats with a wide brims to protect exposed skin.

Picnic poisoning

- Food-borne illnesses increase in warmer weather. Keep food safe for cookouts and camping trips by handling, preparing and cooking it properly.

Firework burns

- Keep a hose or fire extinguisher handy to put out small fires.
- Keep children away from fireworks. Period.
- To care for a burn, wrap it in a clean towel soaked with cool water and get to an emergency room to have the injury checked out.

Lyme disease

- Ticks are most active in late June and early July. Prevent tick-borne illnesses by wearing repellent with DEET and avoiding wooded areas and areas with tall grasses.

West Nile virus

- Mosquitoes are most active in the summer. Protect yourself against mosquito-borne illnesses by using bug spray with DEET and avoiding mosquito breeding grounds.



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Make your college experience a healthy one

Going to college is an exciting time in a young person's life. It is a time for gaining new knowledge and experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. Follow these tips to stay healthy at school:

Eat healthy. Avoid foods that are high in calories, saturated fat, and reduce the amounts of sugars and salt in your diet. Be aware that beverages may be adding extra calories.

Stay active. Walk across campus instead of driving. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Work out with a friend or join an intramural sports team.

Stay safe. Manage stress and maintain balance. Get enough sleep (7 to 8 hours a day), connect socially, and take time for yourself. Seek help from a health professional if you are depressed.

Prevent sexual assault. Sexual violence refers to sexual activity

when consent is not obtained and not given freely. Know your rights, and seek help immediately if you are a victim of violence.

Prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Get tested and know your status. You can prevent STDs.

Avoid substance abuse. Know the dangers of binge drinking (risky sexual behavior, unintended pregnancy, STDs, car crashes, violence and alcohol poisoning) and limit alcohol.

Don't smoke. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases. Don't start, and quit if you are a smoker.

If you or a friend is struggling with a health or safety problem, talk to someone you trust for support, visit your college health center or local clinic or hospital, or contact the campus or community police if your or someone else's safety is threatened.



Owning a dog can improve your health

Did you know there are health benefits to owning a dog? Dogs not only provide comfort and companionship, but several studies have found that dogs decrease stress and promote relaxation. Dogs have positive impacts on nearly all life stages—they influence social, emotional and cognitive development in children, promote an active lifestyle and can even detect oncoming epileptic seizures and certain cancers. Dogs also increase opportunities for you to exercise, get outside and socialize. Research shows that walking a dog daily can help you lose weight too, since it can result in moderate physical activity for 10, 20 and even 30 minutes at a time.

And, regular walking or playing with a dog can decrease your blood pressure, and cholesterol and triglyceride levels, which can contribute to better overall cardiovascular health and fewer heart attacks. Dogs can also increase your serotonin and dopamine levels—two neurochemicals that play big roles in calm and well-being.

Having a canine companion can reduce your allergy risk too. Pet allergies are often the reason why families decide not to get a dog, but a 2010 *Journal of Pediatrics*' study found that children who grew up with a dog in their home were less likely to develop eczema.

Dogs can also help you manage loneliness, isolation and depression by providing companionship. Although owning a dog requires time and attention, the bond between you and your dog can increase fitness, lower stress and bring happiness you never imagined.



Hot vehicles can kill

On average, 38 children die of heatstroke every year because they were left unattended in vehicles in one of three ways:

- 54% were left in vehicles when the driver was distracted at the destination and forgot there was a child in the vehicle
- 27% happened when the child went into an unlocked vehicle and could not get out
- 18% happened the driver knowingly left the child in the vehicle while they did something else, like running an errand

Never leave kids or pets in a parked car

- Leaving a window open is not enough—temperatures inside the car can rise almost 20° F within the first 10 minutes, even with a window cracked open.
- Children and pets left unattended in parked cars are at greatest risk for heat stroke, and possibly death.

Tips for traveling with children

- To remind yourself that a child is in the car, keep a stuffed animal in the car seat. When the child is buckled in, place the stuffed animal in the front with the driver.
- When leaving your car, check to be sure everyone is out of the car. Do not overlook children (or pets) who are asleep in the car.

Heatstroke doesn't only happen on hot days—it has occurred in temperatures as low as 57° F. Children and pets are at risk even in cooler temperatures because of how quickly a car can heat up. Children are at a higher risk than adults of dying from heatstroke because their bodies heat up faster than adults. Pets can get brain damage or even die from heatstroke in just 15 minutes. Dogs can only cool themselves by panting.

If you see a child or pet alone in a car, call 9-1-1. Emergency personnel are trained to respond. You could save a life this summer!

Source: Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine



Feel the burn in common summer activities

Summertime is full of opportunities to get active, whether its with family and friends or on your own. These common, summer, outdoor activities actually burn the most calories and provide hours of entertainment:

Kayaking	319 calories an hour	Rock climbing	790 calories for an hour-long session
Biking	554 calories at 12-14 miles per hour	Surfing	193 calories per hour
Ultimate Frisbee	540 calories per hour	Running on the beach	328 calories at four miles per hour
Paddle boarding	400 calories per hour	Canoeing	286 calories per hour
Swimming	386 calories per hour at a moderate pace	Scuba diving	470 calories per hour in cooler water
Hiking	378 calories per hour up and down hills	Horseback riding	200 calories per hour
Inline skating	300 calories per hour	Skateboarding	319 calories per hour

Get your child active this summer

Now that the calendar has shifted to summer, sunshine, fresh breezes and warm days can make it easier to get energized about healthy living. But, summer days can also lead your family astray. In the midst of school vacation and summer fun, it can be easy for the family to get off track, especially children. Video games, television and smart phones can transform your kids into couch potatoes. As screen time and outdoor playtime compete for children's attention, it can be challenging for them to get the recommended 60 minutes or more of physical activity every day. To keep your kids living an active and healthy life during the summer break, you may need a game plan.

A good place to start is the same place your child just left—school! Often, after-school programs take a new form over the summer by adding extra programs during the summer months. Summer camp is also a great destination for kids. Camps offer a unique opportunity to participate in sports, arts and crafts, and a wide array of seasonal activities. Summer field trips can help flex your child's mental muscle—as do community service projects.

Keep in mind, the journey to a healthy and fit summer should be a family affair. Parents and adults play a big role in helping children grow into healthy habits. Make it a game to check off a suggested activity below every day.

- Take a brisk family walk
- Ride bikes
- Play tag or catch with a baseball
- Garden together
- Have a dance party inside or outside
- Have a relay race
- Stretch or do yoga
- Play Frisbee
- Jump rope
- Climb stairs
- Play catch
- Visit a park
- Go on a hike
- Swim at a local pool
- Search the back yard for interesting bugs



Prevent insect stings when at home

- Wear light-colored, smooth-finished clothing.
- Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos and deodorants.
- Don't wear cologne or perfume.
- Avoid bananas and banana-scented toiletries.
- Wear clean clothing and bathe daily. (Sweat may anger bees.)
- Wear clothing to cover as much of your body as possible.
- Avoid flowering plants when possible.
- Remain calm and still if a single stinging insect is around. (Swatting at an insect may cause it to sting.)
- If attacked by several stinging insects at once, run to get away from them. (Bees release a chemical when they sting, which may attract other bees.)
- A shaded area is better than an open area to get away from the insects.
- If you are able to physically move out of the area, do not attempt to jump into water. Some insects (particularly African honey bees) are known to hover above the water, continuing to sting once you surface for air.
- If a bee comes inside your vehicle, stop the car slowly, and open all the windows.
- If you have a history of severe allergic reactions to insect bites or stings, consider carrying an epinephrine auto injector (EpiPen) and wear a medical identification bracelet or necklace stating your allergy.

Prevent bug bites when on vacation

If you are planning a summer trip, take these precautions

Travelers to tropical and other destinations can take these simple steps to prevent bug bites.

How to protect yourself:

- Wearing insect repellent with at least 20% DEET protects against mosquito and tick bites.
- Use insect repellents according to package directions, and reapply as directed. Higher percentages of the active ingredient provide longer duration of protection.
- Apply protection. When applying both sunscreen and insect repellent, apply sunscreen first, let it dry, then apply insect repellent.

Other ways to prevent bug bites:

- Wear long sleeves and pants.
- Use permethrin-treated gear and clothing.
- Sleep in places that are air conditioned or screened against bugs.
- Sleep under a bed net if your sleeping area is exposed outdoors.

Examples of diseases spread by bugs:

- Mosquitoes: dengue, chikungunya, malaria, Zika, yellow fever, Japanese encephalitis, West Nile virus
- Ticks: African tick-bite fever, Mediterranean spotted fever, tick-borne encephalitis, Lyme disease
- Other: scrub typhus (chiggers), plague (fleas), sleeping sickness (tsetse flies)

See a doctor if you get sick after traveling and tell the doctor that you were traveling. For more information, call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at (800) 232-4636 or visit [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel).



EASY GREEN SMOOTHIE

- 1 cup kale or spinach
- 1 banana, medium
- 1 cup low-fat milk
(or coconut or almond milk)
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 apple, medium (cored, sliced)
- 1 cup frozen berries
- 1 Tbsp flax seeds (optional)
- 1 Tbsp chia seeds (optional)

In a blender, blend the kale or spinach and the liquid of your choice. Add in the rest of the ingredients, blending after each item. Serve and enjoy, cold. Reserve the leftover smoothie in the refrigerator. Consume within 24 hours.

Smart and simple ... smoothies are an easy choice

Made the right way, smoothies can be packed with nutrients, yet low in fat, sodium and added sugar. They are a great way to fuel up quickly and they travel well, which makes them fantastic meals for people on the go. So, when in doubt this summer, whip up a smoothie. Try using these ingredients to formulate the perfect smoothie:

Start with a liquid base. Stay away from sugary juices and opt for unsweetened nondairy milks, coconut water or plain water. Or, try almond milk, coconut milk or cow's milk for added flavor. Start with 3/4 per serving and add more if the smoothie is too thick.

Boost it. Include turmeric, ground flax seeds, cinnamon, matcha powder, cocoa powder, cardamom, fresh ginger, or herbs, like mint or basil.

Add fat to satisfy your hunger. Try nut butter, avocado, tahini or full-fat yogurt.

Don't forget the fruit. A cup of fresh fruit adds sweetness. Try berries, pears, bananas, mango, pineapple, kiwi, apples or peaches. Frozen fruits are also an option.

Veggies are a great addition. Try a half cup of cucumber, carrots, canned pumpkin, kale or baby spinach per serving.

Healthy smoothies can help prevent dehydration, control cravings, aid in digestion, boost brain power, improve bone health, and enhance immunity. Try the easy green smoothie recipe today!

Tips for tailgating with hot dogs

Whether you call it a hot dog, frankfurter or wiener, it's a cooked sausage and a year-round favorite. Before you grab your bun and favorite toppings, see the questions and answers below to keep you and your loved ones safe while enjoying this fan favorite.

What do I need to know about preparing hot dogs?

The same general food safety guidelines apply to hot dogs as to all perishable products: "Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold." After cooking hot dogs on the grill, keep them hot until served—at 140° F or warmer. Keep them hot by setting them to the side of the grill rack, not directly over the coals where they could overcook.

Is it safe to eat hot dogs right out of the package (unheated)?

Although hot dogs are fully cooked, those at increased risk for food-borne illness, such as pregnant women, should reheat hot dogs and luncheon meat until steaming hot before eating, due to the threat of listeriosis.

What is the safest way for young children to enjoy hot dogs?

For children younger than four years old, whole hot dogs and other round foods can be a choking hazard. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises to cut hot dogs lengthwise or into very small pieces before giving them to children. If the hot dogs have a casing, remove it before cutting the hot dog into pieces for the child.

How long can you keep hot dogs?

- Refrigerate or freeze hot dogs immediately after leaving the grocery store.
- If there is a product date, be sure to follow it. If there is no product date, hot dogs can be safely stored in the unopened package for two weeks in the refrigerator; once opened, only one week.
- For maximum quality, freeze hot dogs one or two months.
- Never leave hot dogs at room temperature for more than two hours and no more than one hour when the temperature goes above 90° F.
- If refrigerated promptly after heating (within two hours), they can be safely refrigerated for three or four days.



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Simple ways to modify your coffee shop stop

Whether going to your local coffee shop is a daily ritual or a special weekend outing, consider these alternatives to help you move toward a healthier lifestyle and still enjoy your caffeine fix:



DOWNSIZE YOUR DRINK

If a large coffee drink is your go-to, consider whether a smaller size would hit the spot.



DO DAIRY RIGHT

For lattes and cappuccinos, shift from whole milk to low-fat or fat-free (skim) milk to reduce the amount of saturated fat.



SKIP THE WHIP

Leave off the extras like whipped cream and caramel drizzle. Calories from added sugars in the toppings alone can add up.



CUT THE SYRUP IN HALF

Ask for fewer pumps of sweetener in your drink. A sprinkle of cinnamon or cocoa powder can add flavor without added sugars.



SPLIT THE SWEETS

Share a muffin or pastry with a friend. Pastries are often high in calories from added sugars and saturated fat.



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