



State of Minnesota
The Office of Ombudsman for
Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
Summer Alert



This Medical Alert is based on the work of the Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Medical Review Subcommittee and should be posted prominently. The Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities works to improve the services provided to people with disabilities by communicating important information found in the Medical Review Subcommittee's reviews of deaths and serious injuries. Thank you for promptly reporting deaths and serious injuries. You are helping us to meet our mission.

This Medical Update provides information on conditions that may cause serious injuries and in some cases death. These conditions have resulted in cases that are reported to our office during the summer season. Our hope is that this Medical Update will be a reminder to you to be alert and informed, therefore able to avoid potential problems.

AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)

An Air Quality Index of 101 to 150 is "unhealthy for sensitive groups." "Older adults, people with heart and lung conditions including asthma and even healthy athletes and children" are included in the definition of "sensitive groups."

Please see the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's website for additional information and to sign up for e-mail air pollution alerts: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air/current-air-quality-index>

SUMMER FIRE SAFETY

- "Fire is everyone's fight – fire never takes a vacation."
- Test the batteries in your smoke alarms every month and practice your home escape plan.
- If you stay in a hotel, make sure you know where the exits are located.
- Fireworks are very dangerous. The tip of a sparkler is hotter than 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit; this is hot enough to cause third-degree burns.
- Make sure your grill is in good working condition and make sure you use it safely. Always open the grill lid before lighting. Do not add lighter fluid to an already lit fire and keep a three-foot safety zone around the grill. Use long handled utensils to keep your hands and arms away from the heat.
- Recommendations from <http://usodep.blogs.govdelivery.com/2013/05/20/summer-fire-safety/>

HEAT

- Check the electrical capacity of the facility to evaluate whether air conditioning can be added.
- For the elderly, when traveling, plan rest stops to allow for necessary fluid intake.
- Refer to the Heat Stroke Alert.
- For additional information, please see the CDC website for its "Extreme Heat Prevention Guide, "Hot Weather Tips," a video "How to Stay Cool in Extreme Heat," and more at <http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/>
- Please see the Minnesota Department of Health's new (2013) Extreme Heat Toolkit for Minnesota maps and Minnesota-specific information at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/climatechange/extremeheat.html>

INSECTS

- Check buildings for holes in screens and other spots where insects can get in.
- Apply insect repellents, when possible, before going outside.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants tucked into socks, and closed shoes when in woods or grassy areas.
- Check for ticks after being outdoors.
- Shower as soon as possible after coming indoors. Ticks take several hours to attach themselves to the skin; in the meantime, they can be washed away.
- For more on tick-borne disease prevention and free posters see <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/tickborne/index.html>
- Refer to the Insect Sting Alert.

SUN

- Some medications, such as neuroleptics and antibiotics, put clients at particular risk for sunburn.
- Reduce exposure to the sun with umbrellas, hats, long-sleeved, light weight summer clothing, etc.
- Protect eyes with sunglasses that are labeled to offer 99 to 100 percent UV protection.
- Limit time in the sun, especially between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's rays are most intense.
- Use Broad Spectrum sunscreens with SPF values of 15 or higher regularly and as directed.
- Tips for Applying Sunscreen
 - Apply the recommended amount – a golf-ball sized amount or about one ounce – evenly to all uncovered skin, especially your lips, nose, ears, neck, hands, and feet.
 - Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going out in the sun.
 - If you don't have much hair, apply sunscreen to the top of your head, or wear a hat.
 - Reapply at least every two hours, more often if you're sweating or jumping in and out of the water.
 - Apply sunscreen to children older than 6 months every time they go out.
- Give babies and children extra care in the sun. Ask a health care professional before applying sunscreen to children under 6 months old. (Many health care professionals do not recommend using sunscreen for infants under 6 months.) Keep infants out of the sun, preferably in the shade, and/or covered with a light cotton blanket. Be sure infants do not become overheated.
- Read more about sunscreens at the FDA's Sunscreen page - <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/ucm239463.htm>

WATER SAFETY

- Develop policies based on water safety rules from the American Red Cross. (Refer to the Water Safety Alert).
- Provide training on policies for all staff prior to the swimming season.
- Know what hazards to look for in the specific water environments you'll be in, whether it's the beach, water park, pool, river or lake.
- Review individual abuse prevention plans and risk management plans prior to outings.
- Know each individual's vulnerabilities and provide adequate supervision to ensure the safety of everyone.