

For Immediate Release
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Contact: Lindsay Hodges
(850) 245-4111

DOH OFFERS TIPS TO ENSURE SUMMER SAFETY

TALLAHASSEE—The Florida Department of Health (DOH) encourages everyone to enjoy the summer season by playing it safe. By making wise choices to protect your skin, food and overall health, you and your family can have fun in the sun while staying out of harm's way.

“As the summer heats up and Florida's citizens and visitors spend more time outside, becoming aware of the potential dangers associated with our environment is the best and safest way to enjoy Florida's natural resources,” says DOH Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H. “Many injuries can be avoided by following a few simple steps.”

FOOD SAFETY

Few things in life are better than a summer barbecue, and no barbecue is complete without following the proper food handling procedures below:

- Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after handling food.
- Keep marinating foods refrigerated and boil the used marinade sauce before applying to cooked food. Also avoid putting cooked food on any plate that previously held raw food.
- Use a meat thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature. Beef should be cooked to at least 160°F and chicken to 170°F. Fish is done when the meat is opaque and flakes easily.
- Pre-heat the coals on the grill for 20-30 minutes.
- Pack plenty of ice or freezer packs to maintain a constant cold temperature.

SUN SAFETY

Precautions must be taken to avoid sunburn and skin injuries. Exposure to the sun's ultra-violet (UV) rays is the leading environmental factor in the progression of skin cancer. Liberal use of sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater is recommended to prevent sunburn. Other ways to protect yourself from sunburn are:

- Seeking shade under shelter such as a tree or umbrella,
- Covering up with light-weight clothing,
- Wearing a hat to protect your face, scalp, neck and ears, and
- Wearing sunglasses that deter UV rays (also necessary when using indoor tanning facilities).

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PUFFER FISH

Florida's seafood is among the best in the country, but take care to identify and avoid poisonous fish. Eating puffer fish, commonly known as blowfish, can cause saxitoxin poisoning. Saxitoxin has no taste, color or smell and cannot be destroyed by cooking or cleaning. Symptoms of saxitoxin poisoning include tingling, burning, numbness, drowsiness, incoherent speech, difficulty breathing and in severe cases, death. Also avoid locally harvested shellfish during red tide occurrences.

SWIMMING SAFETY

When enjoying our waters, Floridians and those visiting Florida should engage in water sports that are safe for all involved while taking note of marine life and harmful algal blooms.

Marine life includes naturally occurring plant-like algae like blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) and red tide, which can be present in the open ocean, bays, lagoons and freshwater environments. DOH recommends avoiding areas with obvious algal blooms as contact may cause skin rash, runny nose and burning eyes. However, symptoms are temporary and last only for a few hours.

For more information or to report symptoms related to red tide, blue green algae exposure or puffer fish consumption, call the toll-free Marine Toxin Hotline at 1-888-232-8635. This hotline is operated by the Florida Poison Control Center.

An example of an unsafe water sport is teak surfing. Teak surfing involves swimmers being towed through the water while hanging on to a powerboat's teak swim platform. The threat of carbon monoxide is present because moving boats produce exhaust fumes. Carbon monoxide is a highly toxic gas that has no smell or taste. Inhaling carbon monoxide causes the teak surfer to lose consciousness, become submerged in the water and quickly drown. Many surviving victims have sustained permanent brain damage.

PROTECTION AGAINST MOSQUITO BITES

DOH officials continue to stress the "5 D's" for prevention:

- **Dusk** and **Dawn** (avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood, for many species this is during the dusk and dawn hours).
- **Dress** (wear clothing that covers skin).

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- **DEET** (use mosquito repellents including DEET [N, N diethyl-metatoluamide] on skin. You can add to your protection by applying a repellent directly to your clothing when you are outside). Keep in mind, DEET is not recommended for children younger than 2 months old. Instead, avoid exposing babies to mosquitoes.
- **DRAINAGE** (check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs).

Elimination of breeding sites is one of the keys to prevention.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites

1. Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.
2. Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.
3. Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.
4. Pick up all beverage containers and cups.
5. Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.
6. Pump out bilges on boats.
7. Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.
8. Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
9. Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

BLACK HENNA TATTOOS

Other skin injuries can be sustained by getting black henna tattoos or body piercing. Henna is a coloring made from a plant extract that has not been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for skin application. Some of the henna contains a product called p-phenylenediamine (PPD), which may cause allergic reactions like intense itching, redness, swelling and even scarring at the tattoo site. Persons experiencing these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention and report the instance to the local health department. Body piercing poses health risks if done with unclean instruments. Unclean instruments could be contaminated with Hepatitis B or C, diseases which may severely impair liver function. Also, an abnormal overgrowth of scar tissue, called a keloid, can form.

POISON CONTROL

DOH joins the Florida Poison Information Centers in encouraging individuals to take an active role in safeguarding children from potential dangers that involve products commonly found in every home. This focus on poison-proofing your home is part of the annual campaign to educate the public on the dangers and prevention of accidental poisonings. Almost one million children are exposed to a potential poison each year.

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Children under the age of five are particularly vulnerable to these accidental events due to their natural curiosity about the world around them. What they see, touch and reach is generally put into their mouths.

Almost 60 percent of all calls to the poison information center involve exposures in one of the following five groups: Acetaminophen is used as an aspirin substitute, pain reliever and fever reducer and is often found in children's medication. Toxic symptoms are delayed and can cause profound effects, particularly liver damage. Ethanol-containing products include mouthwashes, perfumes, colognes, hand sanitizers and adult cold medications. Toxic symptoms include sleepiness, drop in blood sugar and shallow breathing. Common hand soaps and detergents may cause upset stomach and may cause persistent vomiting, diarrhea and even dehydration if ingested. Automatic dishwasher detergent may be caustic. Hypochlorites include bleach, pool chemicals and supplies and cleaning products. Toxic symptoms can include irritation to the mouth and stomach, and potential burns to the mouth, throat and esophagus. Hydrocarbon containing products include gasoline, kerosene, charcoal lighter fluid, automobile products and lamp oil. Toxic symptoms may include vomiting, and if the product enters the lungs, fever, coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing or chemical pneumonia can occur.

For poisoning emergencies, call the Poison Information Center; toll free 24 hours a day, at 1-800- 222-1222 (Voice/TDD); calls will be connected based on geographic region. The healthcare professionals at the Center will immediately respond to poison emergencies and answer poison-related questions about medications, household products and other potentially dangerous substances.

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