Hot Tips for Summer Safety

By James McGuinness, M.D.

Summer begins June 20. It may be a time we reminisce about playing outside with our neighborhood friends until after the sun went down.

But this summer, the world is a different place, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. Nowadays children, for the most part, socialize as they distance by playing games and visiting their friends on Zoom.

Summertime is still a time of fun and relaxation for all ages. And with a few safeguards we can all have an enjoyable and safe summer season.

Let’s remember that the heat and sun can be dangerous for many, especially as we age, unless proper precautions are taken. Make sure to drink plenty of water on hot days and bring a supply of water when exercising, walking or going for a ride. Even small increases in temperature can be harmful to seniors who are coping with chronic medical conditions. Keep in mind that some chronic medical conditions and/or medications can impair the body’s ability to react efficiently to rising temperature.
Along with the heat, we must also wear sunglasses to protect our eyes from harmful UV rays. Everyone – young and old – should wear sunscreen when outdoors.

Many people are gardening and taking hikes to keep busy during this pandemic. Do not forget we are all prone to insect and tick bites. If you live in areas where there are many mosquitoes and if you spend a lot of time outdoors, use mosquito repellent to help reduce the risk of getting bit. If you enjoy outdoor activities, wear the proper clothing such as long sleeves, long pants, socks and sneakers. Check yourself for ticks after being outdoors.

Let social distancing and wearing a medical mask be positive routines. Teach your child from 3 years and up to wear a mask. Making or buying a mask with a character or superhero on it may entice them to wear it. Go for a walk or exercise at home. Only half of American adults today get enough exercise. Do not let anxiety or being at home lead to binge eating, alcohol or drug use. Try to sleep approximately seven hours a night – no matter how much you rely on Netflix.

Enjoy the summer weather. Be safe, observe social distancing, wear masks and/or gloves appropriately, use hand sanitizer often, eat properly, exercise and think of others.

*James McGuinness, M.D., is a family physician in Middletown, and is the medical director of the Parker Family Health Center in Red Bank*

6 Tips for a Healthy Summer

CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion offer these 6 tips to help prevent chronic disease and have a #HealthySummer.
1. Don’t Use Tobacco. You can quit today. Build a quit plan and get resources to help you quit.

2. Eat a Healthy Diet. Delicious fruits and veggies make any summer meal healthier.

3. Move More, Sit Less. Get at least 150 minutes of aerobic physical activity every week.

4. Keep Cool in Extreme Heat. Extreme heat can be dangerous for everyone, but it may be especially dangerous for people with chronic medical conditions. Stay cool, stay hydrated, stay informed.

5. Wear Sunscreen & Insect Repellent. For sun safety, wear layered clothes and apply broad spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15. Use insect repellent and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to prevent mosquito bites and ticks. Tip: If you use both sunscreen and insect repellent, apply sunscreen first. After you come indoors, check clothing, body and pets for ticks.

6. Rethink your drink. Substitute water for sugary or alcoholic drinks to reduce calories and stay safe.