TOWNSHIPS TODAY

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOUR TOWNSHIP

Make Safety a Priority This Summer

Summer is in full swing, and it's a time for outdoor cookouts, pool parties, and backyard play dates, not bandaging scrapes, nursing burns, or worse.

Therefore, as a service to residents, here are some important summer safety tips compiled from two knowledgeable sources: UL, an independent product safety certification organization, and the National Institute on Aging.

Our goal is to make this a summer to remember — for all the right reasons — for everyone in the township, so please share these reminders with your friends and loved ones.

From swimming pools and gas grills to playground equipment and high temperatures, summer brings its share of potential dangers. Be safe, not sorry, this season by following our advice for keeping your family — everyone from the young to the young at heart — out of harm's way.

Staying safe in the backyard

- ***Keep grills at least 10 feet from any structure:*** Grilling mishaps cause more than 8,300 fires and send 3,000 people to the emergency room each year. Never grill indoors or near garages or porches, even if it's raining.
- ***Have a spray bottle or fire extinguisher handy:*** An unexpected flare-up can burn more than your burgers. Use a spray bottle to avoid flare ups and have a fire extinguisher nearby. Also, coals get hot — in some cases up to 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit — so dispose of charcoal away from kids and pets and cool it down with a hose.
- ***Never use gasoline or kerosene to light a charcoal fire:*** Both can cause an explosion. When grilling, use insulated, flame-retardant mitts and long-handled barbecue tongs and utensils to handle food and coals.
- ***Check gas grill hoses for cracking, brittleness, holes, and leaks:*** If the tank valve or grill needs to be repaired, do not attempt to do it yourself. Take it to your local home improvement store or qualified appliance repair person.

• ***Inspect outdoor decorative lights carefully:*** Some families add backyard ambience with outdoor decorative lighting. Do not connect more than three midget light string sets together. Light strings with screw-in bulbs should have a maximum of 50 bulbs connected together. Be sure to use light strings bearing the UL mark, which means UL has tested samples of the product for risk of fire, electric shock, and other hazards.

• ***Carefully inspect backyard playground equipment:*** The Centers for Disease Control reports that between 1990 and 2000, 147 children age 14 and younger died from playground-related injuries. Of them, 82 died from strangulation and 31 died after falling to the playground's surface. Most of these deaths, the CDC says, occurred on home playgrounds.

Therefore, make sure that your equipment is anchored safely in the ground, each piece is in good working order, S-hooks are entirely closed, and bolts are not protruding.

Staying safe in the heat: Advice for older adults

When summer rolls around, older adults are particularly at risk for developing heat-related illness because the ability to adequately respond to heat can become less efficient with age

Keep in mind, though, that a person's risk for hyperthermia, the name given to a variety of heat-related illnesses, such as heat stroke and fatigue, is not based only on the outside temperature. Health and lifestyle play a role, too. Factors that may increase risk include:

• Age-related changes to the skin such as poor blood circulation and inefficient sweat glands.

• Heart, lung and kidney diseases, as well as any illness that causes general weakness or fever.

• High blood pressure or other conditions that require changes in diet. For example, people on salt-restricted diets may increase their risk. However, salt pills should not be used without first consulting a doctor.

• Medications, such as diuretics, sedatives, tranquilizers, and certain heart and blood pressure drugs, that minimize perspiration.

• Taking several drugs for various conditions. It is important, however, to continue to take prescribed medication and discuss possible problems with a physician.

• Being substantially overweight or underweight.

• Drinking alcoholic beverages.

• Being dehydrated.

Lifestyle factors can also increase risk, including extremely hot living quarters, lack of transportation, overdressing, visiting overcrowded places, and not understanding weather conditions.

Older people, particularly those at special risk, should stay indoors on extremely hot and humid days, especially when there is an air pollution alert in effect. People without fans or air conditioners should go to places such as shopping malls, movie theaters, and libraries. Many social service agencies, religious groups and senior citizen centers also provide services such as cooling centers. For a list of locations or resources, call your county's Area Agency on Aging.

Heat stroke is an advanced form of hyperthermia that occurs when the body is overwhelmed by heat and unable to control its temperature. As a person's body temperature rises rapidly, the body loses its ability to sweat and cool itself down.

Heat stroke is especially dangerous for older people and requires emergency medical attention. A person with a body temperature above 104 is likely suffering from heat stroke and may have symptoms of confusion, combativeness, strong rapid pulse, lack of sweating, dry flushed skin, faintness, staggering, delirium, or coma. A person with any of these symptoms, especially an older adult, should seek immediate medical attention.

Here are a few tips on what to do if you suspect someone is suffering from a heat-related illness:

• Get the person out of the sun and into an air-conditioned or other cool place.

• Offer fluids such as water, fruit, and vegetable juices, but avoid alcohol and caffeine.

• Encourage the individual to shower, bathe, or sponge off with cool water.

• Apply a cold, wet cloth to the wrists and/or neck, places where arterial blood passes close to the surface and the cold cloths can help cool the blood.

• Urge the person to lie down and rest, preferably in a cool place.

Note: For a free copy of the National Institute on Aging's Age Page on hyperthermia, call toll-free, (800) 222-2225, or go to **www.niapublications.org/agepages/hyperther.asp.**

Staying safe around the pool

• ***Supervise constantly:*** Good supervision means you are able to scan the pool area every 20 seconds and reach the pool in 10 seconds.

• ***Put multiple safety barriers between children and the pool:*** Install a 4-foot fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate that has a locking mechanism beyond a child's reach.

• ***Empty small wading pools and remove all toys after children are through playing:*** Infants can drown in just a few inches of water. Floats, balls, and other toys may attract children to the pool when it is unattended.

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