

Safety Tips for a **FIT Summer**

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Sunny weather, a warm breeze, inviting cool water...what better way is there to rev up your fitness goals than by indulging in a big dose of Summer? Before you partake in your summer activities, be sure to follow some of these basic safety tips in order to maximize your enjoyment and prevent injuries from occurring.



TAKING THE HEAT

Learn to recognize the warning signs of too much heat. Heat cramps occur when the body becomes too hot and dehydrated rather than by a loss of salt or minerals. Most of the time they occur as strong painful contractions of the calf muscles and hamstrings. Drinking water, rest and moving to a cool environment can help to manage most cases of heat cramps. Heat exhaustion is a more severe condition where the body's core temperature becomes moderately elevated (usually to about 100-102 degrees). Affected individuals may become pale and fatigued, complain of dizziness and nausea and some may even start vomiting. Mild cases should respond again to rest, hydration and a cool environment. More severe cases may need IV fluids, especially if the individuals start vomiting.

The most severe form is heat stroke and this can occur even in people who are not exerting themselves. Elderly persons are especially prone to this. Here, individuals may not even be sweating. This can make one become delirious, unconscious, and may result in seizures. Heat stroke is a medical emergency that requires a 911 call for nearest hospital transport.

You can prevent heat related illness by staying well hydrated, using common sense with exertion, and helping your body to cool down. While sport drinks may be beneficial, they are seldom necessary. Water, either tap or bottled, should be your

fluid of choice. Keep plenty at hand. Since your body cools by evaporation of sweat from its skin, exercising in increased humidity retards the cooling process and increases your risk. Wear lightweight, breathable fabrics and try to avoid the hottest hours of the day.



BE SUN SAVVY

Sun exposure causes your skin to age and increases your risk of skin cancer. Outdoor workouts may increase your risk of a burn because your skin perspires. Be sure to select sunscreens with broad-spectrum protection. They will protect against ultraviolet A (UVA) and Ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Use an SPF of 30 or higher and use a generous amount. Be sure to reapply after 30 to 40 minutes of very intense workouts or water sports. Try to wear protective clothing, sunglasses, and wide brimmed hat. Keep in mind that areas such as ears, lips and feet tend to be forgotten. Bring a lip balm along with an SPF of 11 or higher.

If you do get a burn, try applying a cooled gel (keep some in the refrigerator) with an aloe base. Drink plenty of fluids and take an anti-inflammatory to reduce pain and swelling. Blistering sunburns may require more intensive treatment. Anyone with a history of this should eventually be seen by a dermatologist to perform a skin check.

PLANTS AND PESTS

Another peril of the great outdoors is the presence of plants that can irritate the skin and cause a rash known as contact dermatitis. The oils from the plants' leaves can contact inanimate objects to cause rash. Again, wear protective clothing and wash areas of the body that come in contact with such objects as soon as possible. Minor rashes can usually be controlled with a hydrocortisone ointment or calamine lotion. Avoid itching the area and keep it clean and dry. More severe cases may require medical attention.

Always carry your insect repellent and reapply often. In wooded areas, it is helpful to wear light colored protective clothing to detect the presence of ticks. Inspect your skin after outdoor activities for bites. Most insect bites will respond to ice packs, hydrocortisone cream and Benadryl if itching. Always see your doctor if redness of the skin persists, if red streaks emanate from the sting, or if fevers occur.

SAFETY FIRST



Research your sport of choice to find out what sort of protective gear you'll need. Bikers should always wear helmets. In-line Skaters will also benefit from the additional knee and elbow padding and wrist splints to prevent strains and fractures. Avoid overly congested areas as too many people can also become dangerous due to collisions. Swimmers should stay in supervised areas with close access to life preservers. Boaters and users of personal watercraft should wear protective personal floatation devices. You may also be

required to participate in a water safety course especially for those visiting the New Jersey shore. Above all, avoid alcoholic beverages. Not only are they dehydrating, they are a chief cause of injuries, especially drowning deaths.

So...off you go. Use the lovely weather to make the most of your active lifestyle and create long, lasting, happy memories. Enjoy!!!