



## Stay Safe, Stay Active

As the weather warms up, many of us head outside to participate in our favorite outdoor activities. Summer sports are a great way to have fun and get some exercise, and proper planning and common sense can help keep you safe while you play. Whether you participate in team sports, rock climbing, kayaking, water skiing, or any other outdoor activity, there are some things you should know before you head outside.

### What are some common injuries?

Physical activity can help you look good, feel good and perform at your best. However, if proper safety measures are not followed, you risk injuring yourself and potentially those around you. Being informed about some common hazards can help you keep yourself and your loved ones safe. Some of the more common summer injuries include<sup>1</sup>:

- **Head injuries.**<sup>2</sup> While contact sports, particularly football, receive much of the attention surrounding concussions, cycling actually leads to the highest incidence of head injury, accounting for 19 percent of sports-related head injuries. Water sports round out the top five causes of sports-related head injury, beating out activities such as baseball, hockey and horseback riding. Keep in mind that you do not have to lose consciousness to have a concussion! Any time a concussion is suspected, an exam should be performed by a qualified professional such as an athletic trainer or healthcare provider. If no healthcare provider is available, proceed to the closest emergency room.
- **Heat injuries.** The body's temperature rises drastically during physical activity and sweat is then produced to cool itself down. Without proper preparation, the increase in body temperature can lead to a heat injury. If you begin to feel dizzy, become nauseous, develop a headache, experience muscle cramps or lose coordination, stop the activity, seek shade and drink a cool beverage. Contact a medical provider if the symptoms continue.
- **Shin splints.** Shin splints, like most overuse injuries, are generally caused by taking on too much physical activity too rapidly. This includes increasing the intensity, duration or frequency of activity too quickly or using improper technique when pushing yourself past your current physical limits. Equipment can also play a role in causing shin splints, such as the type of shoe being worn or type of surface on which the activity is being performed.
- **Drowning.**<sup>3</sup> An average of 3,533 people drown each year in non-boating related incidents, and an additional 347 individuals die from boating related drowning. About one in five people who die from drowning are 14 years old or younger, and 80 percent are males. Alcohol is involved in 70 percent of the drowning among teens and adults.



## Tips to keep you off the sidelines

It can be tempting to skip the safety measures so you can start having fun sooner, but keep in mind that these proper precautions only take a few minutes of your time and getting injured can sideline you for weeks or even months. Below are some tips to keep you outdoors, active and injury-free<sup>4</sup>:

- **Wear safety equipment.** Many head and neck injuries can be avoided by wearing a properly fitting helmet during any activities where you might experience a blow to the head. This includes bicycle riding, skateboarding, riding an all-terrain vehicle, playing team sports, rock climbing and horseback riding. Bicycle helmets should be replaced after any fall where there is impact to the helmet, regardless of how hard. Elbow pads and wrist guards should also be worn when there is a risk of falling.
- **Don't let the heat get the best of you.** Hydrate before, during and after any outdoor activity, and listen to your body and take breaks in the shade when necessary. Start hydrating about one hour before activity with 16 ounces of water or sports drink and continue to drink four to eight ounces of fluid every 15-20 minutes during exertion. Wear light, loose fitting clothes and give yourself at least a week of light to moderate intensity activity to adapt to a new climate.<sup>1</sup>
- **Ease into activity.** If the only thing you lifted all winter was the remote control, do not try to start back up with your activity where you left off last year or you will likely end up injured. Start with 30 to 45 minutes of low to moderate intensity cardiovascular activity three to four times a week and begin a progressive muscle strengthening program two times per week.
- **Use sunscreen.** Prevent sun damage by applying water-resistant sunscreen – SPF 15 or higher – every time you are outdoors. While sunburns are caused primarily by UVB rays, UVA rays are the leading cause of early skin aging and skin cancer, so ensure you choose a sunscreen that is broad spectrum (protects against both UVA and UVB rays). Sunscreen should be reapplied at least every two hours and more frequently if swimming or sweating.<sup>5</sup>
- **Practice water safety.** Always wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket when you are out on the water. To be effective, life jackets must fit snugly and not be waterlogged, faded or leaky. Other ways to stay safe in, on or around water include<sup>6</sup>:
  - Enter feet first to prevent head and neck injury if you are unsure of the depth of the water.
  - Use the buddy system – do not swim alone and swim where there is a lifeguard whenever possible.
  - Avoid alcohol any time you will be swimming, boating, water skiing or supervising children.
  - Check the weather before you head out and get away from water if there is thunder or lightning.<sup>7</sup>



## Additional Resources

Taking part in outdoor activities can be among the best parts of the summer season. While the risk of injury can never be completely eliminated, there are many steps you can take to make sure you stay safe while enjoying the summer weather. For more information on summer sports injuries and what you can do to prevent them, visit the resources below:

- [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's Injury and Violence Free Living](#) page offers fact sheets, posters, publications, presentations and more to help keep you injury free.
- [STOP Sports Injuries](#) has information for healthcare providers, coaches, parents and athletes of all ages to prevent sports injuries.
- [U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Resource Center](#) contains extensive information regarding boating safety.
- [Naval Safety Center](#) for tips to stay safe this summer, as well as Summer Safety Campaign resources.

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<http://www.aans.org/Patient%20Information/Conditions%20and%20Treatments/Sports-Related%20Head%20Injury.aspx>. Updated December 2011. Accessed June 13, 2013.
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4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Injury prevention for summer sports.  
<http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/NYCU/injuryprevention.asp>. Accessed June 12, 2013.
5. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Questions and Answers: FDA announces new requirements for over-the-counter (OTC) sunscreen products marketed in the U.S.  
<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/ucm258468.htm>. Updated June 23, 2011. Accessed June 17, 2013.
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