



**STATE SAFETY OFFICE**  
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD  
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# SAFETY MESSAGE 21-05

## May is Summer Safety

Summer is almost here! Families are preparing for vacations. Soldiers are preparing for Annual Training. Schools are preparing for summer recess. There are a lot of plans being made to make the most of the nice weather and time together. We should not lose sight of the fact that all of these events come with risks that could impact our safety and our family's safety. Below are some risk factors that should be taken into consideration to insure the safety of our families and troops.

### Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a big problem for anyone who is overdoing it during training and can't take a break, or a moment to cool down. During recreational activities this can be exceptionally problematic for children who don't want to miss out on the fun. Older people, too, are susceptible, especially in a hot apartment with no air conditioning.

Stay ultra-hydrated to avoid heat stroke, water is OK, but Gatorade and PowerAde with [electrolytes](#) are far better because they help replace salt and retain fluid.

Knowing the warning signs is also key to staving off serious trouble. The first sign is cramping in the legs, and if that occurs, cool off and drink fluid until it goes away because if you don't, it can progress to [heat exhaustion](#) and then heat stroke. Cramping -- especially a [cramp](#) in the leg -- is a sign that the body is losing salt and electrolytes, and you really ought to heed it. Cramping and light [sweating](#) gives way to more profuse, heavier [sweating](#), feeling lightheaded and maybe a little nauseous, and then you hit heat stroke, your body stops [sweating](#), and can no longer cool itself.

Another peril of heat [stroke](#) is that as the body gets hotter and hotter, your [blood](#) gets thick and sludgy and makes you more likely to have a [stroke](#).

Some of the signs of heat stroke include:

- Red, hot, [dry skin](#)
- Rapid pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Confusion
- [Dizziness](#)

Let the body cool down naturally in early stages of heat exhaustion, but if you miss the signs and it progresses, put ice packs on the groin, armpits and neck where [blood](#) flows close to the surface. Other ways to cool the body include immersing the body in cool water, placing the person in a cool shower, or wrapping the person in a cool, wet blanket.

When you are sweating too much, it's time to come out of the sun. Activities should be limited to 15 to 20 minutes at a time in the hot sun, because the body can lose a significant amount of water content from sweating -- setting you up for heat stroke.

It's not just heat that makes summer fun problematic. Cold is big problem when kids are out [swimming](#) and have been in the water so long that their lips are blue, they are shivering, and their body temperature has dropped. Make them warm back up to 98.6 before they go back in, no matter how much they plead. All kids want to do is have fun, so a parent has to be a parental and make sure that they warm up.

Children pose a special challenge during the summer. No matter what the potential peril is, the key is being prepared. Travel with a little [first aid](#) kit and make sure you have it where it's readily available to save trips to the ER.

The biggest warning that a kid is getting overheated is if they are complaining and have started to sweat. Remember that if it gets to an extreme, they don't sweat. If a child complains of lightheadedness, take them out of the game.

To treat heat stroke quickly, take them into a cool place and make sure they are hydrated with water or a sports drink.

### **Water Activities**

With kids around water, you always worry about drowning. Never leave kids unattended around any water, and make sure there's adult supervision from an adult who knows how to swim.

Most of us probably recall being told that you can drown if you go into the water too soon after eating. The truth is that when you are digesting food, there's less blood flow in your body and this takes away from strength, so if you had to really use your strength for undertow, you may have a problem. The best bet is to wait a half an hour after you eat before getting back in the water.

### **Grilling Safety**

Summer is a popular time for grilling family meals at home. Yet grilling fires spark more than 10,000 home fires on average each year. To avoid this:

- Always supervise a barbecue grill when in use. Don't add charcoal starter fluid when coals have already been ignited.
- Never grill indoors – not in the house, camper, tent or any enclosed area.
- Make sure everyone, including children and pets, stay away from the grill.
- Keep the grill away from the house or anything that could catch fire.
- Use the long handled tools especially made for cooking on the grill.

### **Insect bite prevention**

An ounce of prevention is really important when it comes to avoiding bug bites this summer. Bees and wasps offer the greatest chance of acute reactions that can be serious.

Many people already know that they are highly allergic to the venom in bee and [wasp stings](#) and are prepared with an [EpiPen](#) to avoid having to rush off to the ER. An EpiPen injects [epinephrine](#) to prevent a [severe allergic reaction](#). Signs of a severe, life-threatening reaction include dizziness due to a drop in [blood pressure](#) and an inability to breathe from swelling in the nose and throat.

But people who don't know yet that they are allergic can have a problem when they get stung. Here's how you know: [Hives](#) develop very quickly if you are allergic. When bees or wasps sting, they go deep, and the venom gets into [lungs](#) and then the [heart](#) pumps more quickly, and within a minute, you will start feeling something, and within minutes, you will definitely know that you are having a reaction. People who are not allergic may only get a reaction where the sting took place.

But any reaction can be made worse by multiple stings. The greatest chance of multi-stings from bees, wasps, or hornets is when you approach their nest or hive. If this happens, turn and runaway to minimize number of bites.

Make sure to get the stinger out quickly. Use a credit card or a blunt-edge object to try to scrape out the stinger. If something like a credit card is not available, use your fingers because it's better than leaving it in and allowing more venom to be pumped in to your bloodstream.

Also, put ice on the sting to reduce the swelling that may occur later, this will also minimize any discomfort.

Also keep the area clean as possible. A topical anesthetic is also helpful to stave off itch and pain that can accompany a bite or sting.

### **Lyme Disease Lesson**

To prevent tick bites, wear appropriate clothing when you go out -- including light-colored clothing on legs, so you can spot any ticks quickly. Insect repellent is also helpful. Apply a repellent containing DEET to clothes and exposed [skin](#), and apply [permethrin](#) (which kills ticks on contact) to clothes.

If you do find a tick on your skin, remember that it's more of a concern when they burrow into the skin and go deep enough to reach blood vessels and draw blood.

When getting the tick out, it's important to get as much out as possible, bring tweezers with you if you are going to be in a tick-infested area to ensure that you get as much as possible.

[Lyme disease](#) is caused by the bite of a tick infected with the bacteria that cause the disease. A few **days to weeks** after the tick bite, a "bull's-eye" [rash](#) may appear with fever, [headache](#), and muscle or [joint pain](#), or a flu-like illness. It is most common during the late spring and summer months in the U.S. and occurs mostly in the northeastern and upper Midwest states.

You may want to keep the tick to show it to your doctor, since certain ticks are more likely to carry the bacteria that causes [Lyme disease](#).

### **Sun Burns and Skin Cancer**

The acute effects of sun toxicity are redness, burning, and [blisters](#). Deeper burns blister and turn white or blanch when touched. With acute sun exposure, if there are not blisters or peeling and a person is just kind of red, a good lubricating lotion will make them feel better and less irritated, but blisters may require medical attention.

If you have had a lot of cumulative [sun damage](#), the warning signs are [wrinkles](#), a leathery thickness of skin, and pigmented lesions. If you start developing irregular moles that look funny or get bigger and become more speckled and spotted, these are warnings [signs of melanoma](#), a potentially fatal form of [skin cancer](#). Other types of skin cancers may distinguish themselves by scaliness, or they may get irritated and not heal. If you are fair skinned with a lot of sun exposure and if you have a family history of melanoma, it's a good idea to see a dermatologist and have your moles evaluated and to do regular skin self-exams.

When doing skin self-exams, experts recommend the "ABCD" rule for moles.







- A is for asymmetry. In suspicious moles, one half of the mole may not match the other half.
- B is for border. Suspicious moles may have an irregular border.
- C is for color. Suspicious moles may have more than one color, such as black, tan, or brown and sometimes red, white, or blue.
- D is for diameter. A mole should be no larger than six millimeters, which is roughly the size of a pencil eraser.


If any moles demonstrate "ABCD," you should see your doctor immediately.

To make sure you stay safe, use sun blockers with a sun protection factor of 15 or higher, and it should be reapplied on a regular basis.

**PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AND YOURSELF FROM SKIN CANCER**

**STAY SUN SAFE OUTDOORS**

-  Seek shade, especially during midday hours. This includes 10 am to 4 pm, March through October, and 9 am to 3 pm, November through February. Umbrellas, trees, or other shelters can provide relief from the sun.
-  Be extra careful around surfaces that reflect the sun's rays, like snow, sand, water, and concrete.
-  Wear sun protection gear like a hat with a wide brim and sunglasses to protect your face and eyes.
-  Sunglasses protect your eyes from UV rays and reduce the risk of cataracts and other eye problems. Wrap-around sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays offer the best protection by blocking UV rays from the side.
-  Wear a long-sleeved shirt and pants or a long skirt for additional protection when possible. If that's not practical, try wearing a T-shirt or a beach cover-up.
-  Apply a thick layer of broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher at least 15 minutes before going outside, even on cloudy or overcast days. Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours and after swimming, sweating, or toweling off.

 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

To find previously published Safety Messages go to our NYARNG Safety Website:

<http://dmna.ny.gov/safety/>

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