

Newsflash

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Going for a drive? Bring the sunscreen.

In a recent study of skin-cancer cases, men had significantly more cancers on the left side of their body – the side most exposed to the sun – than on the right. (The difference wasn't significant for women.) And don't rely on a closed window for protection. Glass blocks ultraviolet B rays, but UVA rays can pass through.



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Staying Safe in the Heat

Hundreds of people die each year in the U.S. from heat-related illness, and children and older people are especially susceptible. But heat illness is 100 percent preventable, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP). Take the following precautions if your area is experiencing severe heat.

Hydrate. Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day, especially water. And avoid alcohol.

Stay inside. Find an air-conditioned environment on hot, humid days, especially if there's an air-pollution alert in effect. If you don't have access to air conditioning, take cool showers or baths, keep shades or curtains closed during the hottest times of the day, use a fan, and open windows for cross ventilation.

Keep heat contained. Use small appliances like slow cookers and tabletop grills rather than your traditional oven or stove to keep kitchen heat to a minimum.

Dress cool. Wear loose-fitting clothing in breathable fabrics such as cotton or linen.

Limit activity. Heatstroke can occur in less than an hour when you're doing a strenuous activity on a hot day. It's best to avoid exercise when it's super hot, especially in the sun and to limit other physical activity. (Save yard work for after the heat wave, for example.)

Keep an eye on the elderly. Visit your elderly family members or friends at least twice a day during extreme heat conditions. If there is a heat hotline in your area, make sure your loved one has this convenient to the telephone.

Monitor children. Properly supervise children during outdoor play, being sure to monitor them closely and frequently.

Remember your furry friends. Check on animals frequently to ensure that they are not suffering from the heat. Make sure they have plenty of cool water.

Hot cars can be deadly. Never leave children or pets in your vehicle. The inside temperature of the car can quickly reach 120 degrees.

In addition, it's a good idea to keep an "ICE" ("in case of emergency") card with you that includes all your pertinent medical information. Make sure it includes names and phone numbers for your emergency contacts. Sometimes people have heat strokes and can't communicate with first responders. Medical personnel are unable to reach family members because they don't know who to call.

If someone you're with develops symptoms of heat stroke, including weakness, cold or clammy skin, fatigue, delirium, nausea or vomiting, headache, confusion, or convulsions, get them out of the heat and to an emergency room immediately. The conditions can be fatal or cause permanent medical complications if untreated. Certain medications can increase the risk of heat stroke by decreasing sweating; those include anticholinergics, antihistamines, beta blockers, and phenothiazines.

The 4 Biggest Sun-Protection Mistakes

Here's the must-know advice about sunscreens, skin checks and sun sensitivity.

Come summer, it's natural to give your skin some thought. After all, it's on display more this time of year than any other. But as you shed layers, you're also exposing skin to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun, which can harm it. Survey after survey has found that many people have misconceptions about how to stay safe in the sun or that they don't put into practice what they know. Common errors include:

MISTAKE 1: Using sunscreen, but incorrectly. We interviewed 135 consumers at a local beach. About 60 percent said they did what our experts advise – put sunscreen on 15 to 30 minutes before heading out so that it has time to form a protective film. But only one-third said they reapply it every 2 hours, which most sunscreen labels instruct.

Other evidence shows that people use about half the amount needed for full protection. And according to our testing, half the amount applied means you get half the SPF. Use a teaspoon on each body part or area exposed to the sun: one for your ears, face, and neck, for example, and another for each arm.

MISTAKE 2: Going without additional protection. No sunscreen keeps out 100 percent of UV rays, so you need other sun-shielding strategies. Seeking shade is a good move, but even canopies, trees, and umbrellas won't block all UV light. Dressing right is important. Clothes with built-in sun protection (ultraviolet protection factor, or UPF) work well, but we found that tops made of lightly woven cotton or a polyester-spandex blend provide a UPF above 100. Add a broad-brimmed hat and sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UV rays, and you're all set.

MISTAKE 3: Not knowing which medications make you sun sensitive. You could be more susceptible to burning or get a painful rash. Those drugs include antibiotics (fluoroquinolones, tetracyclines, and sulfonamides), diuretics (furosemide and hydrochlorothiazide), pain relievers such as ibuprofen and naproxen, tricyclic antidepressants, statins, and sulfonyleureas. The same holds true for anti-aging products such as retinoids (isotretinoin and tretinoin) and glycolic and salicylic acids.

MISTAKE 4: Not following the appropriate screening strategy. You might find that annual skin exams by a professional are reassuring. But the best strategy is to become familiar with your skin and alert your doctor if you see something out of the ordinary, such as an existing mole that begins to change or a new mole that looks different from others you have. Talk to him about how and when you should be screened if you have a family history of melanoma, a personal history of frequent sunburns, or a large or increasing number of moles (they might be precancerous), or if you're fair-skinned or heavily freckled.



Pick the freshest, tastiest produce

Don't be shy – give the melons a squeeze. Fresh, ripe produce has a slight spring. Vegetables like celery, green beans, and zucchini should feel firm, not limp. Juicy, tasty fruit tends to feel heavy in the hand. When it comes to smell, fruits should be sweet, vegetables fresh. The final test, of course, is taste – so go ahead and ask for a sample.

Here are some tips to make sure you get the best fruit and vegetables on your table this summer!

Apples. Rub your thumb across the skin; put the apples back if it wrinkles. You do not need to refrigerate...keep handy on the counter until ready to enjoy. However, if you like your fruit cold...refrigerate.

Pears. Slightly soft and fragrant. Same as apples...store on counter unless you like your pears cold.

Berries. Plump and dry with a sweet aroma. Berries aren't meant to last long. Leave them out and enjoy within a few days.

Grapes. Large and plump with firmly attached skin. Refrigerate unwashed in a plastic bag.

Peaches and Nectarines. Creamy gold background on skin with no redness around the stem. Store on the counter until they are ripe.

Tomatoes. Sweet smell and vibrant color. Should feel soft, not hard. Store unrefrigerated out of direct sunlight.

Bell Peppers. Deep colors. Store unrefrigerated in a paper bag.

Cabbage. Smooth, round head and even coloring. Refrigerate unwashed wrapped in plastic or in an airtight container.

Corn. Bright green husks. Store in the refrigerator in their husks.

Mushrooms. Creamy white or light brown caps that are closed around the mushroom stem. Refrigerate unwashed in a paper bag.