


BEACH HEALTH and Safety GUIDE

A small illustration of beach items including a yellow and white striped umbrella, a beach chair, a beach ball, and a small orange bird.

**Essential Tips to Stay
Safe and Healthy
at the Shore this Summer**

 **Cooper**
University Health Care



Stay Healthy and Injury-Free at the Beach this Summer

Ahh, summer in the Delaware Valley. A great time to enjoy fireworks, water ice, a trip to the ballpark, outdoor concerts, and so much more. But nothing defines summer more than a trip to the Jersey shore. Wildwood, Seaside, LBI, Ocean City, Cape May... wherever your plans take you, make sure you're prepared to stay healthy and injury-free while enjoying the sand and surf.

Whatever you enjoy doing, following this guide will put you and your family on a path to enjoying a happy and healthy summer season! You'll find tips to help you pack, stay safe at the beach, and enjoy other leisure activities.

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Packing

Swimsuit, check. Sandals, check. Beach towel, check. Lounge chair, check. There is certainly no shortage of things to pack when planning a trip to the beach.

In addition to the standard beach fare, keep your health and safety in mind when packing for days spent enjoying the sand, surf, and sun. From sunscreen to a first aid kit, make sure to pack these items before heading down the shore.



1. Sunscreen

If you're planning to spend any time outside—and if you're heading to the shore this summer, you will—make sure to pack sunscreen and SPF lip balm. The long-term effects the sun has on the skin have been well documented. That's why it's important to protect your skin by using a lotion with at least SPF 30 that screens out both UVA and UVB rays. Be sure to apply it to all exposed skin, paying special attention to the face, neck, ears, and arms.

2. First Aid Kit

You never know what can happen when you're away from home. Don't let a minor cut, sting, or headache put a damper on your fun. While many hotels and rental properties will have supplies available, it's best to pack your own first aid kit.

Bring a kit that contains a wide range of supplies, including bandages and gauze for cuts and minor bleeding, burn cream and cold packs for pain relief, antiseptic wipes for cleaning an injury, and Tylenol and ibuprofen for headaches and injury pain relief.

3. Sunglasses

Aside from just plain looking cool, sunglasses protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. Without protection, extended periods in the sun can have long-term effects on your eyes, such as cataracts, which lead to blurred vision.

When selecting the right sunglasses to pack, it's best to choose a pair that will block out 99% to 100% of both UVA and UVB radiation.

4. Aloe Vera

When spending summer days outdoors, even when taking proper precautions, you may get a minor burn. To soothe the sun's effect on the skin, pack a great natural remedy for post-sun skin relief—aloe vera.

Aloe vera helps reduce the effects of minor sunburns by providing soothing relief, hydrating burned skin, and speeding the healing process. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) recommends applying an aloe vera moisturizer to affected areas of the skin to reduce sunburn symptoms.

5. Bug Spray

Summer means bugs. Most are harmless and a natural part of our greater ecosystem. But a few pesky bugs—namely mosquitoes and greenheads—can ruin a relaxing afternoon at the beach and also leave behind itchy skin bites. Some bugs can even spread disease.

There are many types of sprays available, including all-natural, plant-based products. Pack a bug spray to help protect your family from these pests.



Beach Time

No trip to the shore is complete without plenty of beach time. The sound of the ocean, the summer breeze in your hair, and the warm sand beneath your feet can be so relaxing.

Before you head to the beach for the day, it's important to understand that, while enjoyable, the beach can pose certain health and safety risks. The following tips will help you and your family stay healthy and safe at the beach this season.



1. Swimming Safely

There's nothing more refreshing than a dip in the ocean on a hot summer day, but nothing at the beach poses a greater safety risk. Each year, countless vacations are interrupted by minor injuries or more serious injuries caused by swimming accidents and ocean conditions.

Before you consider a swim, check on the current ocean conditions. It's best to avoid rough ocean, large waves, and riptides. You need to have a realistic understanding of your swimming strength. Proceed only when you feel 100% confident. Once it's time to hit the waves, it's best to pair up and keep an eye out for your partner. It's also important to pay attention to the warning flags and to know what they mean and to keep close to the location of the lifeguard.

2. Rules and Regulations

Following the rules sounds simple enough. However, to stay safe and enjoy your time at the beach, it's important to understand the posted rules. Beach regulations are intended to keep you safe and to protect the beach. These rules are mandated by state law and local ordinances, with penalties for any infractions.

While regulations vary from beach to beach, a few typical rules include: swim between the flags, wear a beach badge during lifeguard hours, do not bring alcohol or glass containers to the beach, do not have picnics or fires on the beach, do not litter, and keep off the sand dunes.

3. Hydration

A day at the beach can be a recipe for dehydration. Hot temperatures, physical activity, humidity, and direct sunlight all cause stress on the body. Therefore, it's important to get plenty of fluids while spending time in the sun.

The key to preventing dehydration while at the beach is simple: drink plenty of water throughout the day. Don't wait until you "feel thirsty" because this means that you are already experiencing dehydration symptoms.

4. Footwear

You're likely to encounter many different walking conditions and surfaces at and around the beach. It's great to kick off your shoes and relax, but it's also important to protect your feet with proper footwear.

Sandals are great for the beach because they are easy to slip on and off. They should be worn at all times when walking on ground surfaces to protect your feet from sun-baked sand, stones and other objects that can cause cuts and abrasions, and dirty or contaminated surfaces.

When swimming, it's also worth considering a water shoe to protect your feet from broken shells, ocean debris, and other objects that can harm bare feet.



Leisure Activities

With no shortage of activities to enjoy away from the sand and surf, there's more to summer and the shore than just the beach. While fun, many of summer's leisure activities can pose certain health and safety risks.

Before you fire up the grill, pour an adult beverage, or hit the streets for a bike ride, it's best to be aware of these risks and to know how to stay safe. The following tips will help you and your family stay injury-free while enjoying the fun of summer.



1. Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol is often a staple of summer parties and outdoor barbecues. If you are of age and choose to partake, make sure to do so responsibly by understanding the risks.

Most importantly, drinking in moderation is key. Make sure you have a designated driver, or Uber, lined up to get you home safely. Alternating drinks containing alcohol with plenty of water will help fend off the effects of alcohol and will help prevent dehydration, especially on a hot day. Don't take unnecessary risks while drinking; if you're consuming alcohol, it's best to avoid swimming, handling fireworks, and grilling.

2. BBQ Safety

One of the true delights of summer, and the shore, is firing up the grill for an outdoor BBQ. You can ensure that your cookout is safe and enjoyable by following a few easy tips for grilling and food preparation.

First, make sure to position the grill away from any structures. Before you fire up a gas grill, check for any possible gas leaks. Then, make sure the grilling surface is clean. If you're using a wire brush, be sure to use a quality brush that won't leave potentially harmful bristles behind. Once the grill is lit, do not leave it unattended. Make sure that all food is cooked thoroughly and brought to the proper temperature. When food is served, don't leave it out for too long to prevent foodborne illness. Most experts point to two hours as the absolute maximum time that food can be left out.

3. Bicycling

A great summer activity is going for a bike ride. Before you hit the road, make sure that you take a few important precautions to ensure a safe and enjoyable ride.

To stay safe when riding a bike, the single most effective thing you can do is to wear a properly fitted helmet. Once on the road, obey traffic signs and lights, ride on the right-hand side of the road in the same direction as traffic, and be on the lookout for hazards, such as potholes. Remember to take special precautions if riding at night. Make yourself visible by using a light and by wearing brightly colored clothing.

4. Fire Pits

On a cool summer night, it's great to spend time with family and friends relaxing around a fire pit. However, any activity involving fire poses certain dangers, and fire pits are no exception. Therefore, before firing up, take these precautions.

Make sure that the pit is positioned on a level surface made of concrete or a similar material. Never light a fire pit on a deck, in an enclosed porch, or

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Leisure Activities

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on a grass surface. Make sure the pit is located at least 10 feet from anything flammable, including buildings and trees. Never light a fire pit with anything besides matches or a lighter, and do not use lighter fluid or gas. Use dry seasoned wood in the pit because wet wood causes sparks. Logs should be no longer than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pit's diameter. Always keep sand, water, and/or a fire extinguisher nearby, and when your evening is finished, be sure that the fire is completely extinguished before leaving it unattended.

5. Fireworks

Summer and fireworks go hand in hand. But every year, especially around the Fourth of July, local news programs are flooded with stories of severe injuries that occur as a result of mishandling fireworks. If you plan on lighting up the night sky with your own display, make sure you are properly trained and follow a few safety precautions.

Tips for safe use of fireworks include: read and follow all firework directions, never allow children to handle fireworks, wear eye protection, only hold fireworks that are meant to be held, light one firework at a time, light fireworks in a clear direction and never toward people, never try to relight "dud" fireworks, and once lit, let fireworks sit for 20 minutes before touching them, and place used fireworks in a bucket of water before disposing.

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