

## **Summer Safety – We’re Here If You Need Us**

**By Deborah Herzberg, CEO of Tri Valley Health System**

With evenings growing longer and warmer, we all can agree that summer has arrived. Warm weather celebration and time outdoors are welcome after the long, cold winter.

We Midwesterners enjoy a sweeping range of weather flavors. Sometimes we tend to remember a bit too late that with the return of sunny days comes a greater risk of sun damage to our skin, heat-related illness and the unexpected injuries that can happen when we become more active.

**Sun Damage** - Skin cancer is our nation’s most common cancer, with more than 5.5 million cases of skin cancer treated each year. A recent study showed that about two-thirds of us apply sunscreen incorrectly. The most common error people make is not covering *all* their exposed skin. Use some anytime you are heading outside – and remember to cover any skin that’s going to catch some rays.

While women are more likely than men to use sunscreen, both genders are guilty of overlooking another line of defense: protective clothing. There’s much more than fashion in the wide-brimmed hats that cowboys and gardeners wear. The same rules apply to sunglasses – get ones that look good, sure, but don’t forget they help defend your skin and eyes, too.

Choose sunscreens that offer sun protection factors (SPF) of 30 or higher, but don’t worry about going too extreme; there is little evidence that higher SPF values offer substantially more protection. Use the strongest stuff on the spots that get the most rays, and make sure children are well-protected before they’re running off having fun.

**Heat-related Illnesses** - Children and the elderly are especially susceptible to heat stroke and/or heat exhaustion – both common heat-related illnesses. But healthy adults are not immune. Drink plenty of water, and get to a cool place if you develop a headache or start to feel nauseated, dizzy or fatigued. Heat-related illness can turn deadly so it’s not something to ignore.

**Injuries** - We all can push the limits at times, especially kids – climbing trees, stealing a base during the big game or striving to go as fast as they can on their bikes or skateboards. Slips will happen, and sometimes it’s a kissable bandage-and-a-few-tears situation. Other times it’s a few stitches or a cast. If summer injuries require medical attention, we’ll be here ready to help.

Our 24/7 emergency department is close by and prepared for any unexpected summer happening that leads to illness or injury. We hope we don’t see you there, and expect you feel the same, but things do happen. It’s good to know you’ll have good care, no matter the situation. If something’s less-than-emergency, our same-day services at the Cambridge Medical Clinic is also available. The team can get you in and feeling better quickly so you won’t miss the fun of this season.

Remember the treat that comes with a sunny day at the lake or the park also brings a threat. Stay safe and do your best to avoid sun damage, heat-related illnesses and preventable injuries.