

To Your Health

“Promoting Good Health Through Information”

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Summer 2008

Summer Fun: Recreation Safety Tips

Alisa Krinsky, MS, CTRS, RTC

Summer is here which means it is time to get healthy, stay active and be fit. When planning recreational activities in your community, it is important to be safe so you will have fun, memorable experiences. Below are tips on how to stay safe and have fun while swimming, biking and walking in your community.

Swimming:

- Learn to swim! Take some lessons at your local pool. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. And always swim with a buddy; never swim alone. It is fun and much safer.
- Swim in supervised areas only, and obey all rules and posted signs.
- Use a feet-first entry when entering the water.
- Wear sun screen to protect your skin and prevent sun burn, and limit your time in the sun. Take breaks as often as needed when in hot weather to prevent heat exhaustion.
- Keep yourself hydrated; drink plenty of water. Do not mix alcohol and swimming, however. Alcohol impairs your judgment and coordination, and reduces your body's ability to stay warm.

Biking:

- Always wear a helmet.
- Never ride and listen to music with headphones on at the same time.
- Obey traffic signs and signals. Bicyclists must follow the rules of the road like other vehicles.
- Do not pass on the right. Motorists may not look for or see a bicycle passing on the right.
- Keep both hands ready to brake.
- Dress appropriately. Wear bright colored clothing so you are visible to motorists and dress in layers so you can adjust to temperature changes.
- Use hand signals and make eye contact with drivers.
- Look out for road hazards. Watch out for sewer covers, gravel, sand or debris. Cross railroad tracks at a right angle.
- Use lights at night. It is safer not to ride at night, but if you need to, know that the law requires a white headlight (visible from at least 500 feet ahead) and a rear reflector or taillight (visible up to 300 feet from behind).
- Finally, keep your bike in good condition. Adjust your bike to fit you and keep it working properly. Check brakes and tires regularly. Either have a professional do a bike tune-up each year or learn to do it yourself!

Walking:

- Walk on sidewalks. If sidewalks are not available, walk on the edge of the road or on the left shoulder of the road, facing the flow of traffic. Use pedestrian bridges when they are available.
- Cross at marked crosswalks or intersections. Pedestrians are most often hit by cars when they cross the road at places other than intersections.
- Look left, right, and left for traffic. Stop at the curb and look left, right, and left again for traffic. Stopping at the curb signals drivers that you want to cross. Always obey traffic signals.
- See and be seen. Drivers need to see you to avoid you.
 - Stay out of the driver's blind spot.
 - Make eye contact with drivers when crossing busy streets.
 - Wear bright colors or reflective clothing if you are walking near traffic at night and carry a flashlight.
- Drinking and walking? Alcohol can impair the judgment and motor skills of pedestrians just as it does for drivers. Do not take alcohol risks with walking, just as you would not with driving.

Remember....Have fun & be safe!

Recipe for Health

Gazpacho

This chilled tomato soup is a classic – and chock full of healthy garden-fresh vegetables!

Ingredients:

3 medium tomatoes, peeled & chopped
1/2 cup cucumber,
seeded & chopped
1/2 cup green pepper, chopped
2 green onions, sliced
2 cups low-sodium vegetable juice cocktail
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
1/2 tsp. basil, dried
1/4 tsp. hot pepper sauce
1 clove garlic, minced

Directions:

1. In large mixing bowl, combine all ingredients.
2. Cover and chill in the refrigerator for several hours.
3. Serve once chilled to your liking!

Nutrition Information:

Yields: 4 servings
Serving Size: 1-1/4 cups
Each Serving Provides:
Calories: 53
Total Fat: less than 1 g
Saturated Fat: less than 1 g
Cholesterol: 0 mg
Sodium: 41 mg
Total Fiber: 2 g
Protein: 2 g
Carbohydrates: 12 g
Potassium: 514 mg

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Make Your Feet Last a Lifetime

Rosemary Gill, RN, MS, CDE

You may not think too much about your feet, but taking just a little extra care of your feet can save you trouble later. This is particularly important if you have diabetes, peripheral arterial disease (poor blood flow) or other foot problems. Many people do not want to wear shoes and socks, especially in the summer. If you have blood flow problems or nerve damage in your feet, going without shoes and socks can be very dangerous. You can get small cuts or scrapes on your feet that you may not feel, and that do not heal quickly. Without proper treatment, a small cut can end up leading to serious problems, like infection.

So, how can you take care of your feet?

- Wear shoes and socks, even at the beach.
- Wear water shoes in the swimming pool.
- Wash your feet every day and dry between your toes.
- Look carefully at your feet everyday, check between the toes for skin breakdown and check the bottom of your feet for cuts, scrapes or blisters (if you cannot easily turn your foot over, use a small mirror to look, or ask a family member).
- Keep your nails trimmed straight across, but do not cut them too short or leave sharp edges.
- You can put lotion on your feet to keep the skin soft and moist, but avoid applying lotion between your toes.
- If you smoke, ask your provider for help quitting.
- If you discover any problems with your feet, let your provider know right away.

Make sure that your shoes fit well. Here are some tips on buying shoes from the National Institute on Aging:

- Your shoe size may change as you age so always have your feet measured before buying shoes. The best time to measure your feet is at the end of the day when your feet are largest.
- Most of us have one foot that is larger than the other; fit your shoe to your larger foot.
- Do not buy shoes by the size without trying them on first. The size marked inside the shoe may not fit you.
- Walk in the shoes before buying them to make sure they feel right.
- Choose a shoe that is shaped like your foot. Styles like high heels or pointed toes can hurt feet.
- Stand up when trying on shoes to make sure there is about ½ inch between your toe and the end of the shoe.
- Make sure the ball of your foot fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe.
- Do not buy shoes that feel too tight and hope that they will stretch.
- The heel of the shoe should not slide up and down on your heel when you walk
- The upper part of the shoes should be made of a soft, bendable material to match the shape of your foot.
- Soles should give solid footing and not slip. Thick soles cushion your feet when walking on hard surfaces.
- Low-heeled shoes are more comfortable, safer, and less damaging than high-heeled shoes.

Want to Learn More?

Look for these at your local library:

- *After Cancer Treatment: Heal Better, Faster, Stronger* by Julie K. Silver, M.D. As the head of an oncology rehabilitation program at Johns Hopkins, Silver covers many ways to help you during recovery.
- *Quick Facts on Lung Cancer: What You Need to Know – Now* by the American Cancer Society. The risk factors, diagnosis, treatments, and sources for support are carefully discussed and well presented. *Quick Facts on Advanced Cancer*, *Quick Facts on Colon Cancer*, and *Quick Facts on Prostate Cancer* are also in this series.

Taking an active role in your care can help prevent medication errors! Carry your medication list with you at all times!

Ten Ways to Protect Your Eyes this Summer!

Karen Brahm, OD

1. Wear sunglasses that have 100% UVA and UVB protection. Grey and brown tints are popular for sun wear.
2. Wear polarized lenses when driving, at the beach or swimming pool. These lenses decrease glare caused by sunlight reflecting off surfaces like windshields and water.
3. Choose sunglasses with a 'wrap around' style frame to minimize sunlight coming from various directions.
4. Wear a visor or a wide brim hat with your sunglasses to relieve overhead glare and reduce the need to squint.
5. Wear goggles when swimming and properly fit glasses with safety lenses when playing outdoor sports.
6. Wear safety glasses when working on the car or other construction projects around the house to protect your eyes from falling debris and sharp objects.
7. Wear safety glasses when gardening or mowing the lawn to protect your eyes from flying debris or from tree branches that hang at eye level.
8. Wear sunscreen (SPF of 15 or higher) on your face to protect the delicate skin around your eyes. Be sure to apply it carefully around your eyes, and remember to reapply if you go swimming or are exercising.
9. Try artificial tears if your eyes feel dry in air conditioned environments.
10. Enjoy the shade from a nice tree or from an umbrella at the pool or beach.

Tips for Healthy Living

- Take a family walk after dinner.
- Try eating at least 2 vegetables with dinner.

www.smallstep.gov

VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

VA PALO ALTO DIVISION

3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700

VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 493-5000

VA CAPITOLA OPC

1350 N. 41st Street,
Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

VA MODESTO OPC

1524 McHenry Avenue,
Suite 315
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 557-6200

VA MONTEREY OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
(831) 883-3800

VA SAN JOSE OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3000

VA SONORA OPC

19747 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

VA STOCKTON OPC

7777 Freedom Drive
French Camp, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in To Your Health feel free to contact:

Rachel Grande, PharmD

Pharmacy Practice Resident

VA Palo Alto Health Care System

3801 Miranda Avenue #119 (Pharmacy)

Palo Alto, CA 94304

(650) 493-5000 ext. 66573

To Your Health is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

Editorial Board:

- Randell K. Miyahara, PharmD
- Rosemary Gill, RN, MS
- Rachel Grande, PharmD
- Kris Morrow