

Staying Cool and Healthy in the Summer Heat

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31

Wednesday, 09 August 2023 14:07 - Last Updated Wednesday, 09 August 2023 14:51

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Wisconsin summers are a wonderful time with activities your whole family can enjoy. Remember to stay safe and prepared as you make summer memories that will last a lifetime.

MADISON - Summer has flown by this year, and it's been a scorcher. We've had a record-breaking hot summer, with temperatures setting records across the nation, and August promises to be no exception.

It's important to stay vigilant and safe when enjoying the end of your summer. Warm temperatures combined with high humidity levels can pose a risk of heat-related illness and even death.

When planning to venture outside, be sure to watch the local weather forecast and drink plenty of water. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has a [UV index search](#) that measures the intensity of harmful UV rays to let you know when it's especially important to wear sun protection, like sunscreen or hats.

Community spots, like public libraries and malls, have air conditioning and can be a good place to cool down when out and about. It's important to check on neighbors and loved ones to make sure they are safe. Young children and older adults are more at risk from serious heat illness.

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Beware of hot cars. Never leave a person or pet in a parked car, even for a short time. According to the Department of Health Services, on an 80 degree day, temperatures in a parked car can reach 100 degrees in just ten minutes.



Heat sickness can come on suddenly and quickly become fatal. If you are experiencing dizziness, headache, muscle cramps, weakness, nausea or vomiting, cool down your body right away. Get to a cool place and cool your skin with cold water, like a cold shower or an ice bath. Rehydrate with a cool water or sports drink.

A good way to beat the late summer heat can be found at your nearest waterway. Western Wisconsin is blessed with so many rivers and lakes, great opportunities to go boating, fishing and swimming.

Anytime you are enjoying yourself on the water, make sure to keep your safety in mind. Wear personal flotation devices when boating in deep water, check the local weather before embarking on a trip and bring a first aid kit in case of emergencies.

The Department of Natural Resources has additional guidance on ways to stay safe on the water. You can call DNR staff toll-free at (888) 936-7463 for more information.

Your local health department is your resource about potentially harmful conditions in your area. Always check the conditions of water before you get in, and refrain from bathing in the water if there is a posted health warning. Some communities, [including Eau Claire](#), have implemented

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water testing at public beaches to detect unsafe levels of bacteria or toxic algae blooms that make beaches unsafe for swimmers.



Blue-green algae poses an especially high health risk. Algae blooms can produce toxins that can make people and animals sick or even sustain chemical burns after they swallow, breathe in or have contact with affected water.

Algae can be other colors besides blue-green, including turquoise, tan, purple or white. Blooms can resemble spilled latex paint, green pea soup or streaky and discolored water.

The Department of Health Services has [a fact sheet](#) that explains how to identify and protect yourself from algae blooms. Call the Wisconsin Poison Center immediately if you suspect that you or your companions have been poisoned by an algae bloom, and take injured pets to your veterinarian right away.



During the summer, there are many chances to interact with wildlife, pets, livestock and

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insects, whether on a hike or at a local fair. Wash your hands after interacting with animals to avoid spreading disease or bacteria, such as salmonella and rabies.

Insect repellent is effective in protecting yourself against biting insects and ticks, which can transmit Lyme Disease. To use repellent safely, apply sparingly and only to exposed skin or clothing. Avoid eyes, lips and any wounded skin.

Wisconsin summers are a wonderful time with limitless activities your whole family can enjoy. While you're outdoors spending time in the sun, remember to stay safe and prepared as you make summer memories that will last a lifetime.



Senator Smith represents District 31 in the Wisconsin State Senate. The 31st Senate District includes all of Buffalo, Pepin and Trempealeau counties and portions of Pierce, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson and St. Croix counties.