



## PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE BIG SKY

### SUMMER IS HERE: PRECAUTIONS CAN KEEP IT FUN AND ENJOYABLE!

This issue of *Montana Public Health* offers a potpourri of important prevention steps that can help keep summer healthy for Montanans.

#### Those nasty old skeeter bites

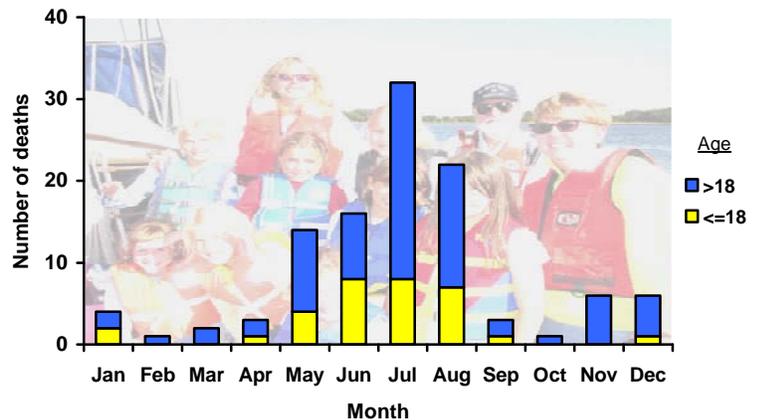
Warm weather and increased outdoor activity increase risk for mosquito-borne diseases, including West Nile Virus. A little knowledge of mosquito ecology accompanied by appropriate precaution can help people protect themselves. Mosquito numbers peak in late July and early August, but danger exists from mid-June through September. Mosquitoes lay eggs in almost anything that holds water, from buckets and birdbaths to marshes and ponds, so whether persons are barbecuing in their backyard or camping at a lake, they may be at risk. Protection comes from eliminating mosquito breeding habitat around homes and by avoiding mosquito bites. Minimize risk by wearing protective clothing and using insect repellants. Limit outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active. The CDC recommends use of products containing DEET for effective mosquito repellent action for adults and children over 2 months in age. Picaridin containing products can also be used for children over 2 months of age.

#### Safety and common sense around water

Drowning is a preventable cause of death. From 1999 through 2005 78% of the 110 drowning deaths in Montana occurred from May through August. (Figure) Alcohol and water recreation do not mix, especially if young children are present. Excess use of alcohol by adults results in inadequate supervision of children and unwise judgment by the adults. Near rivers, lakes or pools this leads to drownings.

Ingestion of untreated or inadequately treated water can cause disease. The most common disease associated with recreational water is diarrhea (caused by pathogens such as *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Shigella* and *E. coli* O157:H7), but other infections also occur (affecting skin, ear, eye, lungs or nervous system).<sup>1</sup> Teach young children not to swallow any water from outdoor bodies of water, or from public pools or wading pools. Water in pools is not drinking quality, but is re-circulated and can contain organisms that may not be killed by normal doses of chlorine.

Figure. Number of unintentional deaths due to drowning and submersion, Montana 1999 - 2005



Do not swim if you have or have recently recovered from diarrhea. If swimming pools or spas are cloudy, do not use them and notify the owners. If it is a public pool or spa, contact the local health department, too.

#### Montanans love to hike and camp

A variety of health and safety risks are associated with hiking and camping, e.g., insect-borne diseases, snake and poisonous insect bites, hypothermia, sunburn, dehydration, falls, and other injuries. Lack of refrigeration and hygiene facilities can increase the risk of foodborne disease. Those who drink water from lakes and streams are at risk of contracting giardiasis as well as other infections. A "survival pack" should be carried by each hiker. The pack should be in a waterproof container and include a pocket knife, compass, whistle, space blanket, nylon filament, water purification tablets, matches and a candle. These items enhance survival and safety in the wild.<sup>2</sup>

#### Everyone loves farmers' markets

Be sure to wash fresh produce before eating it. Soils naturally contain bacteria, which can be harmful if ingested. Don't take chances—Wash.

## Protection from the sun

Unprotected exposure to ultraviolet radiation (wavelengths UVA and UVB) from the sun increases the risk of skin cancer including melanoma. Exposure to UVB increases the risk for squamous cell skin cancer, premature aging and other sun damage to skin. Exposure to UVA radiation during childhood and adolescence plays a significant role in the future development of both melanoma and basal cell cancer. Children and adolescents have more opportunities

and time than do most adults to increase their risk, therefore it is especially important to decrease their exposure to UV radiation. The best protection: avoid outdoor activities during periods of peak UV radiation; seek shade whenever possible; and protect skin and eyes by wearing protective clothing, sunglasses, and a hat. In addition, sunscreen can augment these protective measures. When sunscreen is used, it should have a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or more, and be reapplied regularly.

### **Recommendation: Advise patients about food safety during hiking, camping or boating activities**

- **Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold!**  
Bring cold foods in a cooler with sufficient non-poisonous coolant.  
Cook completely over a campfire or portable stove
- **Keep everything clean!**  
Bacteria present on raw meat and poultry products can be easily spread to other foods by dripping juices. Double wrap or plastic-bag meats and poultry  
Never serve food from the same platter or with utensils used for raw meat or poultry  
Always wash your hands after handling raw meat or poultry and before handling ready-to-eat foods
- **Pack appropriate foods**  
If you are out more than one day, pack shelf-stable items  
Pack safely: use a cooler or pack foods in the frozen state before hiking  
Keep raw foods separate from other foods  
Always store meat or poultry products with a cold source  
Carry bottled water for drinking, or boil water or use water purification tablets
- **Use a food thermometer**  
Cook all meat and poultry to safe internal temperatures: beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts, and chops to 145 °F; pork, ground beef, veal, and lamb to 160 °F; poultry to 165 °F
- **Wash your hands before and after handling food**  
Bring disposable wipes or soap for hand-washing

For more information contact Food and Consumer Safety, (406) 444-5309, [jstetzer@mt.gov](mailto:jstetzer@mt.gov)

#### References:

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/tools.htm>
2. <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/hiking.html>

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