



Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities



Summer Alert

This Medical Alert is based on the work of the Medical Review Subcommittee and should be posted prominently. The Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities works to improve the services provided to people with disabilities by communicating important information found in the Medical Review Subcommittee's reviews of deaths and serious injuries. Thank you for promptly reporting deaths and serious injuries. You are helping us to meet our mission.

This Medical Update provides information on conditions that may cause serious injuries and, in some cases, death. These conditions have resulted in cases that are reported to our office during the summer season. Our hope is that this Medical Update will be a reminder to you to be alert and informed, therefore able to avoid potential problems.

AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)

- An Air Quality Index of 101 to 150 is “unhealthy for sensitive groups.” “Older adults, people with heart and lung conditions including asthma, and even healthy athletes and children” are included in the definition of “sensitive groups.”
- Please see the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s website for additional information and to sign up for e-mail air pollution alerts: <http://aqi.pca.state.mn.us/hourly/>

HEAT

- Check the electrical capacity of the facility to evaluate whether air conditioning can be added.
- For the elderly, when traveling, plan rest stops to allow for necessary fluid intake.
- Refer to Heat Stroke Alert.
- For additional information, please see the CDC website for its “Extreme Heat Prevention Guide, “Hot Weather Tips,” and more at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>

SUN

- Some medications, such as neuroleptics and antibiotics, put clients at particular risk for sunburn.
- Use a sunscreen with a high sun protection factor (SPF), such as 15-30.
- Use sunscreen on all exposed skin prior to sun exposure. Reapply frequently (every 60 to 90 minutes) and after swimming.
- Reduce exposure to the sun with umbrellas, hats, long-sleeved summer clothing, etc.
- Limit the amount of direct sunlight exposure between 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. This is the time of day when UV rays are most harmful.
- Protect eyes with sunglasses that are labeled to absorb at least 90 percent of UV sunlight.

WATER SAFETY

- Develop policies based on water safety rules from the American Red Cross (Refer to the Water Safety Alert).
- Provide training on policies for all staff prior to the swimming season.
- Know what hazards to look for in the specific water environments you'll be in, whether it's the beach, water park, pool, river or lake.
- Review individual abuse prevention plans prior to outings.
- Know each individual's vulnerabilities and provide adequate supervision to ensure the safety of everyone.

INSECTS

- Check buildings for holes in screens and other spots where insects can get in.
- Apply insect repellants, when possible, prior to being outside.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants tucked into socks, and closed shoes when in woods or grassy areas.
- Check for ticks after being outdoors.
- Shower as soon as possible after coming indoors. Ticks take several hours to attach themselves to the skin; in the meantime, they can be washed away.
- Refer to the Insect Sting Alert.

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