

Protect your family from summertime ailments

By Shae Saunders

Summer sunshine and higher temperatures can bring seasonal illnesses and injuries. Understanding how to prevent these troubles will help you and your family keep enjoying the beautiful Montana outdoors.

Bug bites & stings

Don't let bugs spoil the fun! One of the best ways to protect yourself from bites is to use an EPA and FDA approved bug spray for skin and gear. Make sure to reapply according to manufacturer's directions and wash off after coming inside for the day.

If you do get an itchy bug bite, get relief with anti-itch sprays and creams available over-the-counter.

If you have severe, life-threatening allergies to bee stings or other bites, make sure you have your EpiPen prescription updated and carry it with you. If you do use your EpiPen, you should also call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room because you may need additional life-supporting care.

If you go to areas where ticks may be, check yourself, kids and pets after returning from the outdoors. Be sure to check well in skin folds. If you find a tick, remove it using fine-tipped tweezers and slow, steady pressure. Call your health care provider if any rashes develop around the area where the tick was attached.

Prevent sunburn

Fun in the sun can also bring sunburns if you don't protect your skin. Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least SPF 30, about 15-30 minutes before going out in the sun and use plenty. You should apply about a shot glass (1 ounce) of sunscreen for full protection to the body. Don't forget the ears, back of neck, hands and feet. Make sure to reapply at least every 1.5 to 2 hours or after each time you are in the water for a long while. If you get sunburned, get relief with cool compresses, calamine lotion or aloe vera-based gels. Ibuprofen may help with the pain and inflammation of sunburn.

Summer allergies

It's sneezing season! If you have allergies, taking a daily allergy medicine can help keep symptoms at bay through the whole season. Allergy eye drops can help soothe itchy, watery eyes. Keep your nasal passages moisturized and clear using saline rinses. If you are having congestion and sneezing, an allergy nasal spray can help.

Treating rashes

Most summer rashes, such as heat rash and hives, go away with time and avoiding what triggered the rash. Aloe vera and cool showers may relieve symptoms. Over-the-counter sprays or creams containing antihistamines or medication to reduce inflammation can clear up the rash. Try not to scratch the itch. Keep your skin clean and dry. If you notice redness, hot streaking, or pus-like discharge from your rash,

call your healthcare provider. If you have been out in the woods and begin noticing rash where you had a tick, call your healthcare provider.

Bike, ATV & water safety

Remember to ALWAYS wear a helmet when riding a bicycle, ATV or other motorized vehicle. Head trauma is serious and can be prevented with helmets.

If you and your family are going to be in or around water, make sure that everyone is wearing a life jacket, particularly if you or your child cannot swim. Drowning does not require deep water and can happen in seconds. Wearing a life jacket is the best way to prevent accidental drowning.

Dr. Shae Saunders, a family physician at RiverStone Health Clinic, can be reached at 406-247-3350.