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Promoting and Protecting Public Health

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DCHD: Safety Will Maximize Summer Fun

With the unofficial start of the summer season this weekend, Douglas County Health Director Dr. Adi Pour is reminding residents that a couple of basic safety reminders will help you keep the fun going all summer long.

“With the weather finally breaking everyone will be anxious to get outdoors,” Dr. Pour said. “A few basic rules will make sure your summer is as safe as it is fun.”

Here are a few suggestions to help you make the most of our time outdoors:

- Long pants and long-sleeved shirts will protect you from objects thrown by equipment and from insect bites. Avoid anything that is too loose because it can become tangled in power equipment.
- Wear DEET to prevent mosquito bites.
- Check the area where you’ll be working with power equipment to clear it from any objects that could be thrown.
- Keep children away from power equipment and make sure power tools are unplugged if they must be left unattended and only use those tools in dry conditions.
- Drink plenty of fluids, but avoid drinks with alcohol, caffeine or large amounts of sugar. Water is the best drink.
- Save outdoor activity for the cooler parts of the day and use SPF 15 sunscreen or higher.

People also will be looking to get in the water as the temperature rises. Municipal pools and certain other public pools provide lifeguards, but most residential and hotel pools don’t, Dr. Pour said. Even wading pools can be dangerous to young children.

Children under 16 years of age are not permitted to swim without an adult in attendance and no one should ever swim alone. People also should be in good health to swim to prevent the spread of disease, such as cryptosporidiosis (crypto), a disease caused by a parasite that results in watery diarrhea. It is sometimes accompanied by nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and low-grade fever.

Crypto is usually passed when people swallow the parasite and most commonly when diapers are changed without good hand-washing or when a swimmer swallows contaminated water.

“It’s impossible to tell if crypto is in a pool just by looking at it,” Dr. Pour said. “Even regular chlorination and pool filtering won’t kill it. Keeping sick people out of pools is the best way to prevent crypto, because the process for cleaning a contaminated pool is time consuming and expensive.”

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And no Memorial Day weekend would be complete without a backyard barbecue, but Dr. Pour points out that the fun can end quickly if proper food safety procedures aren't followed.

"Food-borne illnesses are a serious matter," Dr. Pour said. "Fortunately, protecting your family is quite simple."

Here are a few suggestions:

- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- Keep raw meats and the juice from raw meats separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Food should go back into refrigeration within two hours of serving.
- Cook all meats thoroughly.

Some other recommendations include keeping children away from the grilling area and placing your grill at least three feet from the house or bushes. Use only starter fluid to ignite charcoal grills and don't spray more fluid on a fire when it starts to go out. If you use a gas grill, make sure the connections are secure and check for leaks but NEVER use a match to check for a gas leak.

One more suggestion is always in season.

"Wash your hands before handling any food," Dr. Pour said. "That is especially true after handling meats or using the restroom."

For more ideas on summer safety, check out the poster on the Douglas County Health Department's website at douglascountyhealth.com

www.douglascountyhealth.com

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