

## PROTECT YOUR BODY DURING THE SUMMER SEASON

By: Dr. John A. Papa

The summer season is upon us, which for many individuals, means spending additional time outdoors and becoming more physically active. Whether you're an aspiring athlete, a serious nature lover, or someone who enjoys fun in the sun, there are special precautions that need to be taken. Below are some useful tips that can be followed to protect your body during the summer season.

- 1. Drink plenty of water:** The average person's body is composed of approximately 75% water. Human beings can survive without food for thirty to forty days, but without water, we can only survive a few days. The body's water supply is responsible for and involved in nearly every bodily process. It is essential for digestion, nutrient absorption, and elimination of waste products and toxins from the body. Water is also responsible for healthy circulation, controlling body temperature, protecting joints by providing lubrication and cushioning, and keeping our skin healthy. In warmer temperatures, we tend to lose more water from the body through increased perspiration. Therefore, special precaution should be taken to replenish fluids lost during the summer season. Consumption of caffeinated and alcoholic beverages should not be relied upon to replenish bodily fluids, as these tend to act as diuretics and actually drain the body of water. The consequences of inadequate water intake/dehydration may include: headaches, gradual or chronic fatigue, digestive problems, poor muscle tone, joint pain, muscle pain and cramping. Water should be an exclusive staple for daily fluid intake. Other beverages such as fruit juices and sodas have high sugar contents, which can lead to undesirable fluctuations in blood sugar levels and excessive caloric intake.
- 2. Get just enough sun:** The sun emits ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Recent research indicates that appropriate sun exposure can provide health benefits. Most of this is attributed to our body's ability to produce Vitamin D naturally. Two important health benefits attributed to Vitamin D include immune enhancement and stimulating an anti-inflammatory response in the body. Appropriate sun exposure also means limiting exposure to avoid sunburn. A sunburn is the result of overexposure to the sun's UV radiation. Excessive exposure to the sun's UV radiation can also contribute to certain skin cancers, and a premature aging and wrinkling of the skin. To protect from sun exposure, apply sunscreen regularly, wear a wide-brim hat and light-colored clothing that protects your exposed skin. Your eyes should also be protected with UV blocking sunglasses. Outdoor activities and sports should be limited to the early morning or late afternoon when UV rays are not as strong. Be cautious on cloudy days, as your skin is still susceptible to burn under these conditions.
- 3. Think safety first:** Prepare accordingly for outdoor activities. Water sports and activities should always be performed with safety in mind. This means wearing a life jacket in deeper water or if you are not a strong swimmer. Parents should always keep a watchful eye on young children when around water. Diving into shallow or unknown waters should never be performed to eliminate the chance of



serious spinal injury. Running on pool decks may result in serious slips and falls. When bicycling or in-line skating, be sure to wear bright reflective clothing and protective headgear to minimize the chance of injury. Wear footwear appropriate for the activities you wish to perform. The right shoes will give you balance, support, and protection.

- 4. Prepare your body for activity and exercise:** The summer is a time when individuals are generally more physically active. The powerful health benefits of exercise and activity are numerous. There are many activities made more enjoyable during the summer season such as gardening, walking, running, swimming, canoeing, bicycling, and golfing to name a few. If you have been inactive for a period of time, gradually ease into activity and take it slow. Be sure to prepare your body for physical activity by stimulating the joints and muscles, and increasing blood circulation. Gentle stretches and exercises such as knee to chest stretch, upper and lower body stretches, and standing back extensions can go a long way in preventing injury and making physical activity enjoyable. In the event that you suffer a muscle or joint injury during physical activity, it is important to recognize the early signs and symptoms, which may include: swelling, bruising, numbness, tingling, pain, weakness and difficulty with movement. Ice should be applied on first signs of symptoms for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Ignoring these early warning signs may result in chronic pain down the road. If symptoms do not subside, you should contact a licensed health professional who deals in the diagnosis and treatment of muscle and joint pain. For more information, visit [www.nhwc.ca](http://www.nhwc.ca).

Following the above rules and safety tips can go a long way in protecting your body during the summer season. From all of us at the New Hamburg Wellness Centre, have a safe and enjoyable summer!

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