

Minority Health

A Publication that addresses Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities

Volume 2, Issue 1

Summer Safety *edition*



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Tips for a Healthier Summer

Protect your skin

July 2010

Message from the Surgeon General

Dear Partner:

On behalf of Dr. Shairi Turner, Director of the Office of Minority Health, and Monica Hayes, Assistant Director, and their staff, I am pleased to share with you this inaugural edition of the Office of Minority Health Quarterly Newsletter.

This issue highlights actions you can take to be healthy and safe during the summer months. I encourage you to work toward making these behaviors habitual so you can improve your health for years to come.

The Office of Minority Health continues to seek new avenues to share health information and best practices. I encourage you to reach out to Monica if you have ideas or information to share or if you are interested in partnering with their office as they work toward reducing health disparities in our state.

To Your Health,



Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

- Some basic guidance is as follows:
- Seek Shade during the hours of peak sun intensity (**10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**) when the UV rays are strongest and can do them most damage.
- Cover Up with protective light-weight clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and long pants of a tightly woven fabric.
- Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck.
- Wear sunglasses that wrap around the head and that are designed to block as close to 100% of both UV-A and UV-B rays as possible.
- Use a Sunscreen or Sun block that protects against UV-A and UV-B rays and has a Sun Protective Factor (SPF) of at least 15. Apply liberally and often while exposed to the sun.
- Ensure that children are well protected while they are out in the sun, swimming or just playing. Early sun damage can have significant repercussions later in life.

Greetings from the Director of the Office of Minority Health and the Deputy Secretary for Health

It is a pleasure to unveil the inaugural newsletter published by the Office of Minority Health entitled, *Minority Health*. The topics of each newsletter will focus around the themes presented in the National Health Observances calendar. Each quarter, the publication will provide current facts, helpful tips, and /or general information related to Florida's growing minority population. As your Director, I encourage and welcome your input and feedback as the newsletter develops and progresses. Our first publication will focus on the importance of skin protection during the summer months.

SUN SAFETY

As residents of the Sunshine State, it is important for people of color to understand the necessary steps to be taken toward summer safety for our skin. Not enough attention is paid to the risk of unprotected sun exposure for people of color. The public's general awareness that we have a high percentage of melanin (the biological pigment that gives skin its coloration) seems to cause confusion about the need for sun screen/ sun block. Although it is a fact that darker skin acts as a natural sunscreen, people of color are being affected by the harmful UV rays from the sun. While melanin does help protect the skin against the damaging effects of ultraviolet radiation, a form of skin cancer known as melanoma may arise from the cells that produce it. In fact, according to the Florida Cancer Data System, melanoma is on the rise among minorities. The National Cancer Institute indicates that "Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer and is the leading cause of death from skin disease. It begins in the melanocytes and may start as a small mole, but can also initiate in other pigmented tissues such as the eye or the intestine." When cancer occurs in people of color, patients often present with advanced stage, and thus a worse prognosis in comparison to Caucasian patients (*Skin Cancer in Skin of Color – Bradford*). Sunscreen and sun block are the key to preventing Melanoma as well as to promoting healthy looking skin.

As people of color, take pride in the gift of our natural brown hues and start protecting your skin today. Be mindful of sun safety this summer and remember, *When the Sun is Up, Cover Up!*

Shairi R. Turner, MD, MPH
Deputy Secretary for Health
Director, Office of Minority Health

For a Healthier & More Enjoyable Summer

Summer is a season where many people gather together outdoors for fun, relaxation, talking with friends and family, and, of course, sharing meals. This makes the summer a great time to remember the importance of food safety. We all care about protecting and keeping our loved ones safe, so let's remember to protect their health by keeping their food safe to eat.

Food safety is one of the focus areas of the Healthy People 2010 and 2020 initiatives. According to the **Healthy People** and **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** websites, proposed **Healthy People 2020** objectives for food safety include, but are not limited to:

- *Reducing infections caused by key pathogens commonly transmitted through food.*
- *Increasing the proportion of consumers who follow key food safety practices.*
- *Reducing contamination of meat and poultry products by food borne pathogens.*

The CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report shows that, in 2007, Florida was one of many states in the highest category for reported cases (≥ 105 reported cases) of E. coli in the United States. As a country, we are continually trying to reduce the prevalence of food borne illness. If we remember, practice consistently, and educate others about food safety guidelines, then we will be one step closer to decreasing food borne illness in our own communities and in the state of Florida as well.

Food Safety Reminders

- Thaw meat in the refrigerator or in cold water
- Use a food thermometer to check internal temperatures
- Cook beef thoroughly to kill all E. coli
- Cook hot dogs until steamy hot to reduce risk of Listeriosis
- Separate raw meat, poultry, fish and eggs from other foods
- When you don't have the ability for proper and thorough washing, be sure to bring one set of utensils for fresh produce and another set of utensils for raw meat, fish, and poultry



Cook ground beef and chicken to a minimum internal temperature of 160°F

Water Safety Campaign Kicks Off With Media-Savvy Visuals

The **Pinellas County Health Department** was one of the partners that highlighted water safety in Tampa Bay on May 25 to kick off the summer awareness campaign. Florida Safe Pools (www.FloridaSafePools.com) invited the media to North Shore Pool in St. Petersburg for a visual representation of the toll that child drownings take on the community—just before Memorial Day, one of the most potentially dangerous weekends of the year for young children around backyard pools.

Unfortunately, a two-year-old drowned in the Tampa Bay area on May 28—just a couple of days after the awareness event. Some of the footage from the Florida Safe Pools event was included in news reports on the need to protect children around backyard pools. To illustrate that an average of **74 children** drown each year, the group filled the pool with 74 inflated life rings at the event on May 25. The graphic image of colorful life rings in the pool appeared in several TV reports and in large photos in newspapers. (The *St. Petersburg Times'* report is here: <http://www.tampabay.com/news/article1097500.ece>.)

The media also reported the group's statistic that the equivalent of **FOUR** preschool classrooms drown each

year in Florida. The message that **744 children** in Florida did not live to celebrate their fifth birthdays was powerful and easy to understand.

The Florida Safe Pools event included first responders, health care workers and a mother whose son nearly drowned in their backyard pool. The mother and son were eloquent speakers about the need to protect children around pools. The event was pitched to the media as the chance to do a “one-stop shop” summer safety package in advance of the holiday weekend. “Keeping children safe around pools is our goal, and FloridaSafePools.com is Tampa Bay’s best resource for helping parents reach that goal,” said Wendy Loomas, campaign co-chair and a Pinellas County Health Department staff member.

The event was a joint effort by the Suncoast Safe Kids Coalition, All Children’s Hospital, the Pinellas Fire Chief’s Association, the Florida Swimming Pool Association, the Pool Guard Safety Foundation and rescue personnel from throughout Pinellas County.

Summer Safety

As we all know **fatal drowning** remains the second –leading cause of unintentional injury – related deaths for children ages **1-14 years**. It is estimated that for each drowning death there are 1 to 4 nonfatal submersions serious enough to result in hospitalization. Rates of fatal drowning are higher among minority populations of certain age groups. Drowning rate of African American children ages **5 -14** is 3.2 times higher than white children of the same age. American Indians and Alaskan Native children rate is **2.4 times higher** than white children.

Tragedy hit home last year when a Hardee Junior High student

drowned during the July 4th celebration at a local park. Kathy Roe school nurse of Hardee Junior High school developed the **GET WET program**.

This program offers swim lessons to low income families on a scholarship basis. Swim lessons will begin June 14, 2010 thru July 22, 2010.

Kathy partnered with local companies to provide scholarships for 64 residents of Hardee County including the seven members of the drowning victim’s family.

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