

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 3, 2017

Contact: Communications Office
(850) 245-4111



Florida Department of Health Encourages Safety This 4th of July

Tallahassee, Fla. —July 4th weekend is rapidly approaching, and the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) encourages everyone to enjoy the holiday with friends and family while staying healthy and safe in or out of the water.

Beach Swimming, Lake Swimming and Everywhere In-Between

Individuals should be cautious of any breaks in the skin before entering the water this summer. Stay on the beach and out of the water if you have fresh cuts or scrapes. In extremely rare cases, certain bacteria in the water can lead to infections through breaks in the skin.

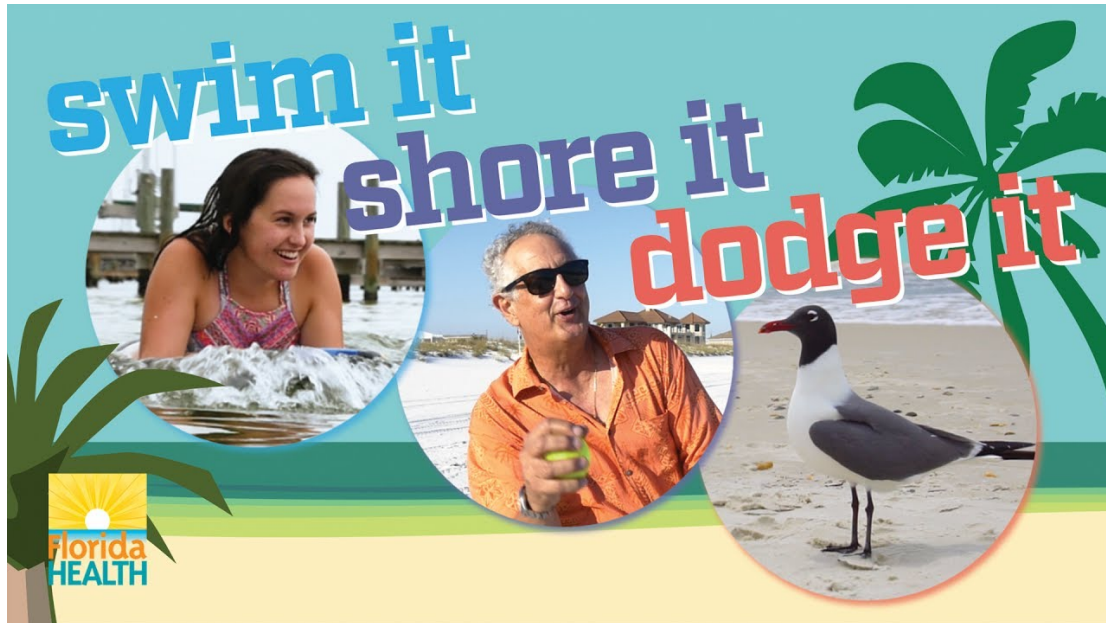
Additionally, individuals who are immunocompromised, e.g. chronic liver disease, kidney disease, or weakened immune system, should wear proper foot protection to prevent cuts and injury caused by rocks and shells on the beach.

If you cut yourself while on the beach, wash it out with soap and warm water. If you notice redness to the site of an open cut or sore, or develop fever and feel ill, seek medical care immediately. Tell your care provider if and when you were in an open body of water.

Please see the Florida Department of Health's ['Swim it, Shore it, Dodge it'](#) Public Service Announcement for guidance on when to avoid getting in the water.

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It's obvious that swimming in open water is different than swimming in a pool but most people are not aware how vastly different swimming in open water is. Even the strongest swimmer can get in trouble swimming in open water. That's why everyone—children, teens and adults—should never swim alone and always use the buddy system when swimming.

Parents know to supervise their small children, but older children—this includes teens—need to be watched, too. Children ages 1–4 are more likely to drown in home swimming pools and children ages 5–19 are more likely to drown in natural bodies of water. Someone watching from the shore who is aware of where swimmers are at all times is an important layer of protection.

Other measures can add layers of protection:

- Attention to safety signs and flags can help swimmers avoid dangerous conditions and currents like rip tide—weather.gov/forecast delivers beach forecasts and current statements by ZIP code.
- Open cuts or wounds should not be immersed in water; if there's bacteria in the water, they can enter the body through a cut or wound. Water should not be swallowed as well.
- A cut or wound that happens when swimming, wading or boating should be washed with clean, running water and soap, and covered with a clean, dry waterproof bandage.

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Individuals should not enter the water if they have fresh cuts or scrapes. In extremely rare cases, certain bacteria in water can lead to Necrotizing fasciitis or severe infections with *Vibrio vulnificus*. Additionally, individuals who are immunocompromised, e.g. chronic liver disease, kidney disease, or weakened immune system, should wear proper foot protection to prevent cuts and injury caused by rocks and shells on the beach. Please see the Florida Department of Health's '[Swim it, Shore it, Dodge it](#)' Public Service Announcement for guidance on when to avoid getting in the water.

A Few Extra Precautions for Swimming in Warm Freshwater and Hot Springs

It's not safe to take in warm freshwater through the nose. Swimmers should wear nose clips or avoid putting their heads underwater. Digging in or stirring up mud and scum should be avoided.

Sun's Up, Cover Up

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. In 2015, 6,484 melanoma cases, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, were reported in Florida.

The best way to protect skin is to cover with sunscreen, shade and clothing. FDOH recommends using a sunscreen with a UVA/UVB SPF 15 or higher. Sunscreen is most effective when it's reapplied every two hours.

Shade breaks taken throughout the day, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun is strongest, limits sun exposure.

While hats and sunglasses are standard beach attire, adults and children should also cover up with lightweight clothing. Swim shirts are a good idea. Many carry a UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) rating of 50+ that blocks out over 98 percent of the sun's harmful rays.

When using sunscreen with insect repellent, apply sunscreen first.

Beat the Heat

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Anyone can suffer from [heat exhaustion](#) so it's important to know the symptoms: headaches, dizziness, weakness, lightheadedness, irritability or confusion, upset stomach and vomiting. Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke—the most serious form of heat injury.

Dress for the heat: the same lightweight, loose-fitting clothing worn to cover up from the sun, can also reflect heat and sunlight if it's light-colored. This type of covering helps the body maintain normal temperatures.

Drinking plenty of water before thirst sets in and avoiding alcohol will keep the body hydrated. Heavy meals will increase body temperature.

Food Safety Tips for the Outdoors

Food preparation and food safety go hand-in-hand. The rising summer temperatures enjoyed outside are the same temperatures that cause foodborne germs to flourish.

Raw meat and ready-to-eat food should be kept in separate insulated and chilled coolers (kept at 41° F or below). [StateFoodSafety.com](#) advises using clean plates and utensils when switching food preparation to cooking to avoid cross-contamination between raw food and cooked food. Using clean plates throughout the meal also keeps plates fresh and avoids cross-contamination between foods that have been sitting out in the temperature danger zone (41°F–135°F) and fresh foods.

A food thermometer is the best tool to ensure meat is cooked hot enough to kill harmful germs. The CDC's "[Get Ready to Grill Safely](#)" is a helpful checklist for keeping food transport and preparation safe.

Leftovers should be saved in small portions and refrigerated within two hours of cooking. If outside temperatures are greater than 90°F, leftovers should be refrigerated within one hour of cooking. Food left out more than two hours should be thrown out.

FDOH reminds everyone preparing food to wash their hands with soap and clean, running water before and after handling raw meat, poultry and seafood, and to wash work surfaces, utensils and grills before cooking. Hands should be washed after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, coughing, sneezing or playing with a pet.

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About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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