

Safety Alert – Summer is Here!

Number 16-12

1 BACKGROUND

No doubt you have noticed summer is definitely here! The risk of colds and flu is much less but we can't forget the health issues related to summer temperatures so it is time to think about how we can avoid illness, whatever we are doing.

1. **Mosquitos:** NSW Health is predicting that during the 2016/17 summer we are going to see an increase in the number of mosquitos compared with last year due to the high rainfall since May and therefore an increase in mozzie breeding habitat. To avoid the risk of mosquito borne viruses the best prevention is protection against bites – see under actions.
2. **Heat illness:** This occurs when the body cannot sufficiently cool itself. Factors that contribute to this include temperature, humidity, amount of air movement, radiant temperature of surroundings, clothing and physical activity (metabolic heat load). People who work in an office environment and who do little physical work are unlikely to be at risk of suffering heat illness. What they experience as a result of higher temperature and increased humidity is likely to be heat discomfort. However, the risk of heat illness does need to be considered and managed for activities that are undertaken outdoors and this applies equally to work and non-work related situations.

2 ACTION REQUIRED

1. **Mosquitos:** Prevention is better than cure!
 - a. Cover-up with a loose-fitting long sleeved shirt and long pants when outside and wear socks and shoes where possible;
 - b. Apply mosquito repellent to exposed skin, avoiding eyes and mouth, and also open cuts and wounds;
 - c. Take special care during peak mosquito biting hours, especially around dawn and dusk;
 - d. Check out your home and garden, remove potential mosquito breeding sites such as pooled rain water and making sure the window and door screens are intact;
 - e. Take extra precautions when travelling overseas in areas with a high risk of serious mosquito-borne diseases.
2. **Heat illness:** Before undertaking activities that will involve exposure to sun and heat consider the risk of suffering from heat illness and take action to avoid any increased risk. Action that can be taken include:
 - a. Avoid high level physical activities in the hotter parts of the day (11am till 4pm);
 - b. Taking regular breaks out of the sun;
 - c. Drink cool water regularly;
 - d. Manage tasks and recreation to reduce the time exposed to the sun or hot environment;
 - e. Wear light loose fitting clothing;
 - f. And don't forget SLIP, SLOP, SLAP before going outdoors in the sun!!

3 ASSISTANCE

- a. The NSW Health Department has some very good information on Mosquitos and Beating the Heat on the following links: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/mosquito.aspx> www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/default.aspx . Additional information can also be found in the document Mosquito Repellent Guidelines <http://medent.usyd.edu.au/RepellentGuidelines.pdf>

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the Health and Safety Team on 49218847 (x18847).