

11 Tips for a Safe Fourth of July

1. **Be a safe swimmer.** Water sports and fireworks are two of the biggest pastimes for Fourth of July celebrations, and these are both linked to numerous deaths and injuries each year. Never [swim](#) alone, and make sure that kids' water play is adequately supervised at all times. Many [drownings](#) occur when parents and other adults are nearby, so always have a designated chaperone for water play and don't assume that others are watching the kids. Statistics show that most young children who drown in pools have been out of sight for less than five minutes.
2. If [fireworks](#) are legal in your community and are a part of your celebration, be sure to store and use them safely. **Keep the kids away from the fireworks at all times**, and keep spectators at a safe distance. Attending fireworks displays organized by professionals is always safer than trying to put on your own show.
3. **Use alcohol responsibly.** [Alcohol](#) and fireworks can be a hazardous and dangerous combination. Also, have a designated driver to bring partygoers home from the festivities. Remember also that alcohol and swimming can be as dangerous as drinking and driving.
4. Lakes, waterways, and seas will be crowded with boats. **Review safe boating practices**, and don't drink and drive your boat. Alcohol consumption while operating boats or other motorized water vessels is illegal, and you can be arrested for a BWI ([boating under the influence!](#)). Be sure that you have an adequate number of life preservers on hand for extra guests. Become familiar with the [boating laws in your area](#).
5. **Cover food and beverages outdoors** to discourage [bees and wasps](#) from attending your party. If someone is [allergic to insect stings](#), you should have an emergency [anaphylaxis](#) kit on hand. Wearing shoes, long sleeves, and long pants outdoors and avoiding fragranced body products, bright colors, and sugary drinks can also help prevent bee stings.

6. **Apply sunscreen** both before and during an outdoor party. Ultraviolet rays from the sun can cause both premature aging and [skin cancer](#) in the long term, and a [painful burn](#) the next day. Even those with darker skin should [use a sunscreen](#) with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 15, according to recommendations from the American Academy of Dermatology.
7. **Check prescription medications** you are taking to assure you will not have a [sun-sensitizing drug reaction to the medication](#).
8. If you'll be hiking or camping in an area where [ticks](#) are abundant, wear long-sleeved, light-colored shirts and long pants tucked into socks or boots to **protect yourself from [tick-borne diseases](#)**. For your skin, you can use a tick repellent with no more than 30% DEET according to the manufacturer's instructions. Products containing DEET should not be used on children less than 2 months of age and should not be applied to the hands or face of young children. Check yourself (and your pets) for ticks at the end of the day.
9. Spend adequate time indoors or in the shade and **drink plenty of fluids to [avoid heat illness](#)** in extremely hot climates. The risk of heat illness is increased when participating in strenuous activity or sports, and those with chronic medical conditions and the elderly are also at an increased risk of [heat exhaustion](#) and/or [heat stroke](#). Alcohol consumption can also promote [dehydration](#) and increase the risk.
10. **Keep children away from campfires and grills.** Gas leaks, blocked tubes, and overfilled propane tanks can be a cause of grill fires and explosions.

Don't leave the picnic spread out all day. Allowing food to sit in outdoor temperatures can invite foodborne illness. The U.S. FDA suggests never leaving food out for more than one hour when the temperature is above 90 F and not more than two hours at other times. Foods that need to be kept cold should be placed in a cooler with plenty of ice or freezing packs and held at a maximum temperature of 40 F. While mayonnaise and other egg dishes are often associated with [food poisoning](#), any food can potentially become contaminated. Adequate hand washing and food preparation can also help prevent food poisoning.