

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Fireworks and family gatherings are favorite past times on the 4th of July

Panhandle Public Health District urges families to take precautions and have a safe and healthy Independence Day. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Safety Council recommend simple steps for families to plan healthy meals, stay safe outside and enjoy fireworks safely.

Picnics are a big part of the Fourth of July tradition. Take the opportunity to serve healthier options lower in fat, salt and calories, and be sure to follow these food safety tips:

- Cook meat, poultry, and eggs thoroughly
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly
- Don't cross-contaminate one food with another. Use separate serving utensils for each dish.
- Wash hands, produce, cutting boards, utensils and countertops

Be sure to take precautions to make sure friends and family are safe during outdoor activities. This includes wearing appropriate safety gear, avoiding heat-related illness, and practicing sun and water safety.

- **Beware of Bugs.** Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET, wear long sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks and take extra precautions at dawn and dusk.
- **Swim Safe.** Practice healthy swim behaviors by taking a shower prior to entering a pool to help protect your family from recreational water illnesses and help stop germs from getting in the pool in the first place. When swimming in lakes never swim alone, respect the rules posted for swimmers, watch for weather hazards and take extra precautions to keep children safe.
- **Beat the heat and stay hydrated.** Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink water; the human body needs fluids on a regular basis. Getting too hot and dehydrated can make you sick. Symptoms include a decrease in urination, dry mouth and throat and feeling dizzy when standing up.
- **Protect your skin.** Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays in as little as 15 minutes. Protect yourself by seeking shade, wearing sunglasses, a hat, sun-protective clothing, and using sunscreen.

The safest way to enjoy fireworks is at a community display conducted by professionals. Due to the dry conditions in the Panhandle be sure to check for bans on fireworks before buying them for personal use and be sure to use precautions to protect against fires. Make safety a priority by keeping these important tips in mind:

- Older children should use fireworks only under close adult supervision. Never allow young children to handle fireworks, especially sparklers.
- Light fireworks outdoors in a clear area, on a smooth, flat surface, away from onlookers, houses and flammable materials.

- Do not try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks; douse and soak them with water and discard them safely.
- Have a fire extinguisher and/or a garden hose and bucket filled with water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire.
- Stay away from illegal or homemade fireworks, which can often be deadly.

Each year there are dozens of injuries over the 4th of July, follow these tips for a safe and healthy holiday.

For additional information visit www.pphd.org or call PPHD at 308-487-3600 or toll free at 866-701-7173. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.