

# LET'S Talk

SUMMER 2007

HEALTHY BODIES • SOUND MINDS • A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

## A Zap in Time!

FOOD-BORNE ILLNESSES affect between 6 and 80 million people in the United States, and result in at least 9,000 deaths annually.

### The offender?

Looking innocent enough but often brimming with all manner of spores and bacteria, like E. coli and salmonella, your sponge is often the main kitchen culprit. Other usual suspects include kitchen dishcloths and pot scrubbers.

### The reason?

These items are a common source of kitchen contamination because they usually come in contact with cooked and uncooked foods and then remain damp for long periods.

### The solution?

Microwaving sponges and plastic pot scrubbers can effectively kill several kinds of bacteria that can cause illnesses. In fact, in a December 2006 study published in the *Journal of Environmental Health*, researchers from the

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## Tanning Is More Than Skin Deep

"THE HEALTHIEST SHADE FOR YOUR SKIN is the color you were born with," says Martin A. Weinstock, M.D., Ph.D., chairman of the American Cancer Society's Skin Cancer Advisory Group. "If you change that color, you'll only have trouble in the long run."

That "trouble" may be skin cancer, the most common of all cancers. Numerous studies have shown that ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or tanning salons may lead to wrinkles, sun damage and skin cancer.

"Even the actors on *Bay Watch* protected themselves by wearing plenty of sunscreen and by using self-tanning products. They knew that if they exposed themselves to ultraviolet radiation, it would damage their skin and shorten their careers," says Dr. Weinstock.

### Types of skin cancer

Skin cancers are divided into two types, nonmelanomas and melanomas.

**1 NONMELANOMA:** The most common types of nonmelanoma are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. Basal cell carcinoma begins on areas exposed to the sun and is slow growing. Squamous cell carcinoma usually appears on the face, ears, neck and hands and is more likely to invade tissues beneath the skin and spread.

**2 MELANOMA:** Also called malignant melanoma, it usually appears on



### The Best Way to Prevent Skin Cancer

Dr. Weinstock says Americans should take a cue from the Australians, who have adopted the slogan "Slip, Slop, Slap" to combat the skin cancer in their country:

- Slip on a shirt.
- Slop on some sunscreen.
- Slap on a hat.

TO LEARN MORE: American Cancer Society, 800-ACS-2345, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

the trunk or lower legs. Melanoma almost always is curable in its early stages but is likely to spread to other areas of the body if left untreated. Risk factors include numerous moles, UV radiation and fair skin.

# Late-Breaking Health News

>> **Nearly 40 percent of Americans experience fatigue at work**, a problem that carries billions of dollars in costs from lost productivity, according to a study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

The study of nearly 29,000 employed adults found 38 percent had experienced “low levels of energy, poor sleep or a feeling of fatigue” during the past two weeks.

The study looked at the effects of fatigue on health-related lost productive time — not just absenteeism but also “presenteeism,” or days employees were at work but performing at less than full capacity. Fatigue reduced work performance mainly by interfering with concentration and increasing the time employees needed to accomplish tasks.

>> **Cold medicine is dangerous for children younger than 2 years of age**. More than 1,500 toddlers and babies were treated in emergency rooms over a two-year period, and three died because of bad reactions to cold or cough medicine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The agency warns parents not to give over-the-counter cold remedies to children under age 2 without consulting a doctor.

The deaths of three infants 6 months or younger in 2005 led to an investigation that showed the children all had high levels of the decongestant pseudoephedrine, up to 14 times the amount recommended for children ages 2 to 12. The ingredients in the medicine can increase heart rate and blood pressure, in some cases enough to be dangerous.



>> **U.S. tobacco companies increased the level of addictive nicotine in their cigarettes by 11 percent** from 1998 to 2005, and did so in a variety of ways according to a Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) study.

The tobacco companies accomplished the increase not only by intensifying the concentration of nicotine in the tobacco but also by modifying several design features to increase the number of puffs per cigarette taken by smokers.

Increases in smoke-nicotine yields occurred in each of the four major manufacturers and across all the major cigarette market categories, including light and ultralight. In analyzing major brand-name cigarettes, Harvard researchers found that increases in smoke nicotine per cigarette averaged 1.6 percent each year over those seven years. Nicotine is the primary addictive ingredient in cigarettes.

“Our analysis shows that the companies have been subtly increasing the drug nicotine year by year in their cigarettes, without any warning to consumers,” says Gregory Connolly, program director of the Tobacco Control Research Program at HSPH.

**For help to quit smoking, contact the FOH smoking-cessation program at 800-457-9808.**

## VITALITY-ON-DEMAND

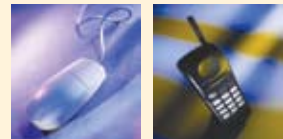
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# Children's Summertime Safety

SUMMER IS A GREAT TIME FOR KIDS of all ages to play outside, having fun as they exercise. But keeping youngsters safe and sound requires vigilance and good sense. The following guidelines can help keep your kids safe when swimming in a pool or jumping on a trampoline.

## Pool Safety

Small children can drown easily in water they can stand in. No pool — not even a foot-deep plastic kiddie pool — is drown-proof. The following precautions can help protect children:

- No child should be left to play in a pool of any size without a responsible adult in attendance at all times. A child can drown in the few minutes it takes for an adult to run inside and answer the phone or door or use the bathroom.
- If a child can't swim, a life jacket — a personal flotation device approved by the U.S. Coast Guard — should be worn at all times near or in a swimming pool. Flotation rings, inflatable rafts or plastic foam “noodles” are not safe substitutes for life jackets. Even when wearing a life jacket, a child can choke on water, so an adult should be in the pool with a nonswimmer at all times.
- A home pool should be surrounded by a fence with a self-locking gate.



## Helpful Web Sites for Parents

The following Web sites offer information to help parents keep their children safe, not only during summer but year-round.

- ➔ Kids.gov, the official U.S. government site for children, [www.kids.gov/k\\_safety.htm](http://www.kids.gov/k_safety.htm)
- ➔ My Space Safety, tips from the FBI on Internet safety, [www.myspace-safety.org/fbi-parents-guide.aspx](http://www.myspace-safety.org/fbi-parents-guide.aspx)
- ➔ MedlinePlus Child Safety Site, [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childsafety.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childsafety.htm)
- ➔ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov), click on Child Safety Seat Information in the “Quick Links” drop-down menu
- ➔ National Safe Kids Campaign, [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

## Trampoline Safety

Trampoline injuries include broken bones, concussions and other head injuries, neck and spinal injuries, sprains, cuts and scrapes. If you allow your children to jump on a trampoline, these precautions may help prevent injuries:

- No child younger than 6 should use a full-size trampoline. All children should be supervised by adults.
- Shock-absorbing pads should be installed to cover the steel frame, springs and hooks.
- The surface under and around the trampoline should be covered with wood chips, sand or the type of rubber matting found in playgrounds.
- Only one child at a time should use a trampoline.

# Do You Think Your Lawn Mower Is a Pushover?

LAWN MOWERS ARE A FAMILIAR SOUND IN THE SUMMER. Mowing the lawn is so common that it's easy to forget how dangerous a power lawn mower can be.

## Take it seriously

Each year, nearly 80,000 Americans require hospital treatment for injuries caused by lawn mowers, according to a study conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The most common injuries include cuts from the blade, burns from touching hot parts and wounds from objects shot out of the mower.

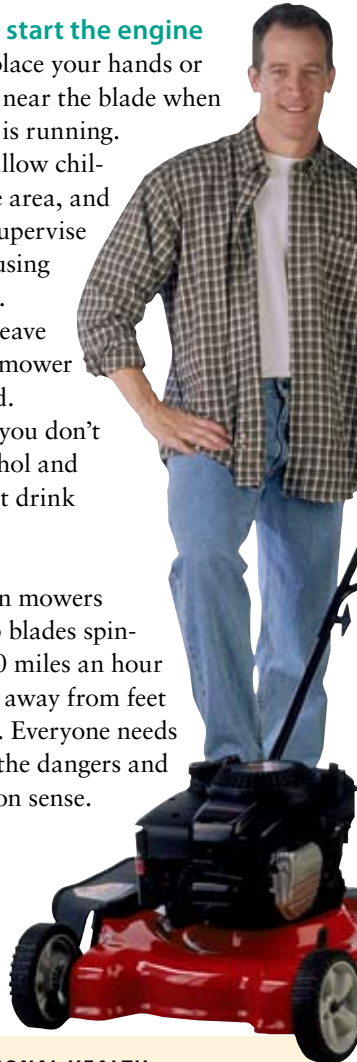
## Before you begin

- ❑ Pick up sticks, rocks, toys and trash first.
- ❑ Check the protective guards on the mower. Make sure they are secure.
- ❑ Wear safety glasses, long pants and sturdy shoes to protect yourself in case objects fly out from under the blade.

## After you start the engine

- ❑ Don't place your hands or any object near the blade when the engine is running.
- ❑ Don't allow children in the area, and carefully supervise teenagers using the mower.
- ❑ Never leave a running mower unattended.
- ❑ Just as you don't drink alcohol and drive, don't drink and mow.

Power lawn mowers have sharp blades spinning at 160 miles an hour just inches away from feet and hands. Everyone needs to respect the dangers and use common sense.



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University of Florida found that just two minutes in the microwave on full power was sufficient to neutralize more than 99 percent of the pathogens on sponges and pan scrubbers.

Only one pathogen — bacillus cereus — needed additional time to be neutralized. It takes about four minutes in the microwave to eradicate bacillus cereus.

A good rule of thumb is to zap those sponges about every other day. At the workplace, if the sponge gets minimal use, make sure you zap it at least once a week or more often.

Here are some handy tips to remember before you use the microwave to sanitize sponges:

- Only microwave sponges and pot scrubbers that DO NOT contain steel or other metals.
- Don't microwave dry sponges. Make sure the sponge/scrubber is wet.
- To avoid burns, don't handle materials right after zapping them.

To avoid food-borne illnesses, get to know the risks. Some of the most common risks include poor personal hygiene (failure to wash hands after touching contaminated foods), cross-contamination by using tainted equipment on several food items, inadequate cooking (time or temperature) and improper storage or holding temperatures.

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If you have not received the right quantity of newsletters, your address is incorrect or has changed, you would like to have the newsletter sent to you electronically, or you have other questions regarding the newsletter, contact Ayrol Young, Federal Occupational Health, at 312-886-5479 or ayoung@psc.gov. To visit us on the Web, go to [www.FOH4You.com](http://www.FOH4You.com).

Help available all day, all week, all year.

**1-800-222-0364**

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