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Now that summer is in full swing, many families are planning activities for 4th of July. This may involve travel, picnics, swimming, campfires, and fireworks. We want to make sure that this holiday is remembered only with happy memories from celebrations and not a trip to Urgent Care or the Emergency Room.

You may hear it a number of times, but please drive safely by avoiding alcohol, allowing plenty of time to get to your destination and wearing your seat belt. Remember that driving requires your full attention, so pull off the road if you need to use your cell phone. Effect July 1, 2010, the use of hand-held electronic devices to write, send or read a text message is prohibited.

To prevent food-borne illness, remember the old saying - always keep your hot foods hot and your cold foods cold. The longer food is at warm temperatures, the more likely food-borne illness will result. Keep hot foods at 140°F or hotter to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. Wrap hot food in towels, then newspaper, and place inside a box or heavy paper bag. Keep these foods warm on a lit grill or use within one hour. Freeze your own blocks of ice in milk cartons or plastic containers for use in the cooler. Put cold foods in water-proof containers or wrap in plastic wrap or aluminum foil and completely immerse in the ice inside the cooler. If using frozen gel packs or containers of homemade ice, place them between packages of food. Never just set containers of food on top of ice.

The trunk of your car can reach temperatures of 150°F so it is best to transport coolers in the passenger area of the car. When you arrive at the picnic site, put a blanket over the cooler and place it in the shade to maintain cold temperatures. Keep the cooler closed until ready to use the contents. Because most picnic leftovers have been sitting out for more than one hour and have had many people handling them, throw them out. If there is still ice in the cooler when you return home, the leftovers are ok to eat.

While hitting the water, whether it be a pool or lake, swim only in designated areas, take rest breaks and always swim with a buddy. Practice ’touch supervision’ for preschool children by being close enough to reach the child at all times. Adults should not be involved in any other distracting activity (such as reading, talking on the phone or playing cards) while supervising children. And even though you are in water, remember to keep your body hydrated as well!

Roasting marshmallows and telling stories by an open fire are favorite camp fire activities. Camp fires should be a safe and fun experience for everyone. Designate a play area to keep bikes and other toys out of the safety zone. Set rules about who should light the campfire, add wood or put out the fire. Be sure all matches and lighters are out of reach and sight of children. Matches and lighters should be stored in a secure location. Practice the Stop, Drop and Roll technique if clothes catch on fire.

They may be exciting and colorful, but fireworks are also dangerous! The CDC cautions “The safest way to prevent fireworks-related injuries is to leave firework displays to trained professionals.” People actively participating in fireworks-related activities are more frequently and severely injured than bystanders. More than 4 of every 10 injuries were children under 15 years of age and 7 of every 10 people were male. Most injuries involve the hands and fingers, eyes, and legs and more than half of the injuries were burns. Fireworks not only cause physical effects such as blindness and permanent scarring but also life-threatening residential and motor vehicle fires.

Despite some of the best planning and safety rules, accidents do happen. Rest assured the staff at Floyd Valley Hospital and Family Medicine Clinics will be here if you need us!