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SUMMER PROTECTION

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After enduring the months of May and early June, most people were not even sure that there would be a summer. However, just in case summer does arrive, there will be people asking questions regarding sunscreen and insect repellent. I am sure that everyone understands that excessive sunlight is unhealthy for everyone, and no, tanning beds are not healthy either (an entirely separate topic). For babies and children, the sun poses a greater risk than in adults. One or two blistering sunburns in children dramatically increases skin cancer risk. Babies' and children's skin is thinner and burns easier than in adults. So, for babies under 6 months of age, limit their exposure to direct sunlight, and utilize light, long clothing. You may use small amounts of broad spectrum (both UV A, and UV B protection) on small amounts of their body. The sunscreen should be a minimum of SPF15, and higher is recommended. Over 6 months of age, sunscreen may be used all over their body after first applying a small amount to determine if there will be a reaction to the sunscreen. Always apply the sunscreen at least 30 minutes before sun exposure. Notify your physician if your child under 1 year old has a blistering sunburn, or fever, or if your child is greater than 1 with a blistering sunburn and a fever.

Another summer hazard is mosquitoes and ticks. Mosquitoes carry West Nile Virus in this country, and far worse illnesses in other countries.

West Nile Virus is not usually a threat to children's health. Ticks carry Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Lyme disease, Colorado Tick Fever, and other less common illnesses. Lyme disease is not endemic to Montana. Insect repellent with DEET (a really long chemical name) is very effective at keeping away these biting health hazards. DEET is also safe to use within certain parameters. Do not apply insect repellent with DEET to children under 2 months of age. Over 2 months of age, repellents with DEET concentrations between 10% and 30% are effective, and not harmful to children. Over 30% DEET has not been deemed safe for children, and is not proven to be more effective than the 30% DEET. DEET concentrations of 10% are effective for about 2 hours, while DEET (the last time I will write these letters as a word) concentrations of 30% are effective for 5 hours. Only apply insect repellents to areas of the body that are exposed, but being careful to avoid the hands of young children, as well as eyes, mouth, and open wounds.

These tips will help protect your children, and yourselves from two outdoor summer maladies. Should summer arrive this year, following these guidelines will help families with children enjoy every moment of summer days and nights.





HEALTH CARE AFTER 50

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As we move into different age ranges, our health care needs change. Preventative health care and screenings can make a substantial difference to your future health and quality of life. This article will focus on health care needs and recommendations of adults 50 years and older. But for those younger readers- don't stop now, because you too, will one day be the fabulous age of 50. These recommendations are for healthy individuals without pertinent family history or other medical conditions. Your health care provider should make recommendations for your care based on your lifestyle, your personal family history, and any other risk factors.

OSTEOPOROSIS: Regular monitoring of height at a consistent location can give early indications of decreased bone density. A DEXA scan (dual-energy-xray-absorptiometry) is one of the standard tests to detect osteoporosis (holes in the bone). Screening is recommended every few years after age 65 in women with risk factors, or in men with risk factors.

Risk factors for osteoporosis include: ❖White or Asian descent ❖History of a bone fracture in first degree relative (sibling or parent) ❖Weight less than 127 pounds ❖Smoker ❖Oral steroid use for longer than 3 months ❖Alcohol use greater than 2 drinks/day ❖Decreased calcium ❖ Decreased physical exercise ❖Estrogen deficiency. To help offset these risk factors, good nutrition is essential. Your nutritional status should be regularly assessed, along with your weight. A daily intake of calcium of 1200-1500mg daily, and Vitamin D (400-800IU daily) should be strived for. Weight bearing physical exercise is also good for keeping bones stronger.

LIPID SCREENING: Most people are aware that high cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. You should have your cholesterol checked (after having not eaten for 8-12 hours) every 5 years if normal and no family history. More frequent testing may be recom-

mended based on your personal health.

THYROID SCREENING: Your thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) should be checked every 5 years.

CANCER SCREENING:

Colon: Over 50 years of age you should have a colonoscopy every 10 years. In addition, stool tests should be done regularly to detect hidden blood in the intestine.

Skin: Annual skin exam by self and healthcare provider.

Breast: All women over 50 years of age should have an annual mammogram. **Cervical:** Pap test every 2-3 years until age 65, as long as no changes in sexual situation, i.e. new partners. Women who have had a hysterectomy should discuss pelvic exam recommendations with their provider. **Prostate:** All men over 50 years of age should have annual prostate (rectal) exams, and a blood test; PSA (prostate specific antigen) for detecting prostate abnormalities. **Testicular:** Regular testicular self exams, and annual exam by clinician yearly after age 60.

ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS:

Tetanus/diphtheria- shot every 7-10 years throughout lifetime, at least one of these boosters should also contain pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine. **Pneumovax-** one if over the age of 65 years, two if younger than 65 years when first received, and 5 years have passed in between vaccinations. This is designed to protect against pneumococcal infection that can affect lungs, blood, and brain. **Zostavax -** Age 60 years and older. For protection of shingles/herpes zoster. As you age, the incidence of zoster increases. Up to 50% of people living to age 85 years will get shingles, but no one can predict who. The vaccination helps decrease the chance of getting shingles. The older you are when getting the vaccine, the less effective it is. **Flu:** On average, hundreds of thousands of persons are hospitalized yearly with the influenza virus, and many thousands die, most of who are elderly. A yearly flu shot is recommended.

As with any vaccination, getting the injection is not a 100% guarantee that you will not develop the illness.

Please call Lolo Family Practice for an appointment to discuss any health care needs.

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