

Some tips to stay healthy and safe over your summer break from the public health team at North Yorkshire County Council

We hope you have a wonderful summer and enjoy the holidays in this lovely weather. We've pulled together some information we hope you will find useful to help you and your family stay healthy and safe over your summer break. Information is included on:

- Ticks and Lyme disease
- Reservoir safety
- Visiting petting farms
- Measles
- Meningitis
- Sun safety

Ticks and Lyme disease

Ticks are tiny spider-like creatures and are found in woodlands, parks and gardens. They are most prevalent in late spring, summer and autumn. PHE is asking the public to be mindful of getting bitten as we increasingly venture outdoors over the coming months.

Once a tick bite is detected it is important to remove the tick with tweezers as soon as possible to reduce the risk of becoming ill. Most ticks do not carry the infection but any area in which ticks are present should be regarded as potential risk areas for acquiring Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection which is transmitted by tick bites. Often the only symptom of Lyme disease is a rash, which gradually spreads from the site of the tick bite. The rash can cover a large area and last for weeks if left untreated. Some patients may also have 'flu-like' symptoms.

If left untreated more serious symptoms may develop in the following weeks or months. Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics and early treatment usually clears the rash within several days and helps to prevent the development of complications. More serious symptoms also respond to antibiotic treatment.

To minimise the risk of being bitten by an infected tick, we advise:

- wear appropriate clothing (a long sleeved shirt and long trousers tucked into socks). Light coloured fabrics are useful, as it is easier to see ticks against a light background
- consider using insect repellents, such as DEET-containing preparations
- inspect skin frequently and remove any attached ticks. Ticks can be very small, look for something as tiny as a freckle, or a speck of dirt
- at the end of the day, check again thoroughly for ticks, especially in skin folds
- make sure that children's head and neck areas, including scalps, are properly checked
- a shower or bath after returning from a tick-infested area helps to reduce risk
- check that ticks are not brought home on clothes
- check that pets do not bring ticks into the home on their fur

Reservoir safety information from Yorkshire Water

In this current hot weather people are often tempted to cool down by taking a swim in our reservoirs. However, cold water can be a killer and we'd like to raise awareness of these risks amongst young people. Cold water shock can lead to hyperventilation, increased blood pressure, breathing difficulties and heart attacks plus water temperatures remain just as cold in summer as in winter."

We are promoting the 'Float to Live' summer safety message from the Royal National Life Saving Institute (RNLI). In their hard-hitting video, they deliver advice on how to react should you become stricken in cold water.

Everyone who falls unexpectedly into cold water wants to follow the same instinct, to swim hard and to fight the cold water. But when people fight it, chances are, they lose. Cold water shock makes you gasp uncontrollably and breathe in water, which can quickly lead to drowning.

If you find yourself unexpectedly in the water, the message is to float until the cold water shock has passed and you will be able to control your breathing and have a far better chance of staying alive.

What to do if someone falls into deep water

- The first thing to do is call for help – straightaway. Call 999, ask for fire service and ambulance. The emergency services will need to know where you are. Accurate information
- can save precious minutes. If you have a smart phone and have location services or map tool enabled, this can help.
- Don't hang up – stay on the line but try and continue to help the person if appropriate.
- Never ever enter the water to try and save someone. This usually ends up adding to the problem. If you go into the water you are likely to suffer from cold
- Can the person help themselves? Shout to them 'Swim to me'. The water can be disorientating. This can give them a focus.
- Look around for any lifesaving equipment. Depending on where you are there might be lifebelts or throw bags – use them. If they are attached to a rope make sure you have secured or are holding the end of the rope so you can pull them in.
- If there is no lifesaving equipment look at what else you can use. There may be something that can help them stay afloat – even an item such as a ball can help.
- You could attempt to reach out to them. Clothes such as scarves can be used to try and reach or a long stick. If you do this lie on the ground so your entire body is safely on the edge and reach out with your arm. Don't stand up or lean over the water– you may get pulled in.
- Be mindful that if the water is cold the person may struggle to grasp an object or hold on when being pulled in.

Visiting Petting Farms

Visiting a farm is a very enjoyable experience for both children and adults alike, and there are some great ones in North Yorkshire, but it's important to remember that contact with farm animals carries a risk of infections because of the germs they carry naturally.

There are a number of bugs that can be picked up during a visit to a farm, including E. coli and Salmonella. These bacteria live in the gut of animals, so people can get infected at farms mainly in two ways – either by touching animals in the petting and feeding areas or by coming into contact with animal droppings on contaminated surfaces around the farm. These harmful bacteria can get accidentally passed to your mouth by putting hands on faces, or fingers in mouths. It only takes a small number of the bacteria to cause infection.

Washing your hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm running water and drying them with disposable paper towels immediately after you have touched animals (including bottle feeding lambs), fences or other surfaces in animal areas will reduce the risk of infection. Do supervise children closely to ensure that they wash their hands thoroughly too. And please remember – hand gel or wipes are not a substitute for washing hands with warm running water.

As well as good hand hygiene, there are some simple hints and tips to help avoid unpleasant after effects from a farm visit:

- don't put hands on faces or fingers in mouths while petting animals or walking round the farm;
- don't kiss farm animals or allow children to put their faces close to animals;
- don't eat or drink while touching animals or walking round the farm. This includes not eating sweets, crisps or chewing gum. Eat and drink in picnic areas or cafes only;
- don't taste or eat any animal foods or unpasteurised produce such as milk or cheese, and don't eat anything that has fallen on the floor;
- check that cuts and grazes on children's hands are covered with waterproof dressings; and
- remove and clean boots or shoes that might have become soiled and clean pushchair wheels. Then wash your hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm water and dry with paper towels.

If anyone is sick or has diarrhoea within two weeks after a farm visit they should contact their GP or call NHS 111 as soon as possible. If anyone, particularly a young child, has bloody diarrhoea, seek immediate emergency medical attention.

Public Health England has produced a free leaflet that give more information about avoiding infection on farm visits. It can be downloaded from

www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-visits-avoiding-infection

Measles

Young people are encouraged to make sure they have had both doses of the Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine before going on holiday to Europe where there are large outbreaks of measles. Cases of measles also continue to rise across England in unvaccinated people of this age. The vaccine is available free to anyone who has not received both doses as a child. It protects against measles, mumps and rubella, all of which can be very serious diseases and are highly infectious. While vaccine uptake levels in the UK in young children are currently very high, coverage levels dipped to a low of 80% in 2003. This means that there are significant numbers of unprotected teenagers and young adults who could catch measles both in England, particularly in environments of close mixing such as summer festivals and when they travel abroad for the summer holidays. Children up to the age of 18 who missed, or only partially completed, their earlier MMR vaccination can have a "catch-up" MMR vaccination on the NHS. If you know or suspect your child hasn't been fully immunised, arrange with your GP for them to have a catch-up MMR vaccination.

Meningitis

Teenagers and "fresher" students going to university for the first time are advised to have a vaccination to prevent meningitis and septicaemia, which can be deadly. The MenACWY vaccine protects against four different strains of the meningococcal bacteria that cause meningitis and blood poisoning (septicaemia): A, C, W and Y. Cases of meningitis and blood poisoning (septicaemia) caused by a highly virulent strain of Men W bacteria have been rising since 2009. Older teenagers and new university students are at higher risk of infection because many of them mix closely with lots of new people, some of whom may unknowingly carry the meningococcal bacteria at the back of their noses and throats. Anyone who is eligible for the MenACWY vaccine should have it, even if they've previously had the Men C vaccine. The MenACWY vaccine is highly effective in preventing illness caused by the four meningococcal strains, including the highly virulent Men W strain.

In school, children aged 13 to 14 (school year 9) are being offered the MenACWY vaccine in school as part of the routine adolescent schools programme, alongside the 3-in-1 teenage booster, and as a direct replacement for the Men C vaccination. For older teenagers, the MenACWY vaccine provides important protection, and all teenagers born between September 1 1998 and August 31 1999 are advised to arrange vaccination now with their GP. In addition, anyone born on or after September 1 1996 who missed their routine school vaccination in school years 9 and 10 or the catch-up MenACWY vaccination can get the vaccine from their GP up to their 25th birthday. For students going to university or college for the first time, including overseas and mature students, who have not yet had the MenACWY vaccine remain eligible up to their 25th birthday. They should contact their GP to have the MenACWY vaccine before starting university or college. If that's not possible, they should have it as soon as they can after they arrive.

Sunscreen and sun safety

Sunburn increases your risk of skin cancer. Sunburn doesn't just happen on holiday – you can burn in the UK, even when it's cloudy. There's no safe or healthy way to get a tan. A tan doesn't protect your skin from the sun's harmful effects. Aim to strike a balance between protecting yourself from the sun and getting enough vitamin D from sunlight.

Spend time in the shade when the sun is strongest. In the UK, this is between 11am and 3pm from March to October. Make sure you:

- spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm
- make sure you never burn
- cover up with suitable clothing and sunglasses
- take extra care with children
- use at least factor 15 sunscreen

Don't rely on sunscreen alone to protect yourself from the sun. Wear suitable clothing and spend time in the shade when the sun's at its hottest. When buying sunscreen, the label should have a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 to protect against UVB and at least four-star UVA protection. UVA protection can also be indicated by the letters "UVA" in a circle, which indicates that it meets the EU standard. Make sure the sunscreen is not past its expiry date. Most sunscreens have a shelf life of two to three years. Don't spend any longer in the sun than you would without sunscreen.

The sun protection factor, or SPF, is a measure of the amount of ultraviolet B radiation (UVB) protection. SPFs are rated on a scale of 2-50+ based on the level of protection they offer, with 50+ offering the strongest form of UVB protection. The star rating measures the amount of ultraviolet A radiation (UVA) protection. You should see a star rating of up to five stars on UK sunscreens. The higher the star rating, the better. The letters "UVA" inside a circle is a European marking. This means the UVA protection is at least one third of the SPF value and meets EU recommendations. Sunscreens that offer both UVA and UVB protection are sometimes called broad spectrum.

Most people don't apply enough sunscreen. As a guide, adults should aim to apply around two teaspoons of sunscreen if you're just covering your head, arms and neck or two tablespoons if you're covering your entire body while wearing a swimming costume. If sunscreen is applied too thinly, the amount of protection it gives is reduced. If you're worried you might not be applying enough SPF15, you could use a stronger SPF30 sunscreen.

If you plan to be out in the sun long enough to risk burning, sunscreen needs to be applied twice 30 minutes before going out and just before going out. Sunscreen should be applied to all exposed skin, including the face, neck and ears – and head if you have thinning or no hair – but a wide-brimmed hat is better. Sunscreen needs to be reapplied liberally and frequently, and according to the manufacturer's instructions. This includes applying it straight after you've been in water – even if it's "water resistant" – and after towel drying, sweating, or when it may have rubbed off.

Water washes sunscreen off, and the cooling effect of the water can make you think you're not getting burned. Water also reflects ultraviolet (UV) rays, increasing your exposure. Water-resistant sunscreen is needed if sweating or contact with water is likely. Sunscreen should be reapplied straight after you've been in water – even if it's "water resistant" – and after towel drying, sweating, or when it may have rubbed off.

Take extra care to protect babies and children. Their skin is much more sensitive than adult skin, and damage caused by repeated exposure to sunlight could lead to skin cancer developing in later life. Children aged under six months should be kept out of direct strong sunlight. Apply sunscreen to areas not protected by clothing, such as the face, ears, feet, and backs of hands. Get more sun safety advice for children. To ensure they get enough vitamin D, all children under five are advised to take vitamin D supplements.

Protect your eyes in the sun. A day at the beach without proper eye protection can cause a temporary but painful burn to the surface of the eye, similar to sunburn. Reflected sunlight from snow, sand, concrete and water, and artificial light from sunbeds, is particularly dangerous. Avoid looking directly at the sun, as this can cause permanent eye damage.

Wear clothes and sunglasses that provide sun protection, such as a wide-brimmed hat that shades the face, neck and ears; a long-sleeved top; trousers or long skirts in close-weave fabrics that don't allow sunlight through and sunglasses with wraparound lenses or wide arms with the CE Mark and European Standard EN 1836:2005.

How to deal with sunburn. Sponge sore skin with cool water, then apply soothing aftersun or calamine lotion. Painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, will ease the pain by helping to reduce inflammation caused by sunburn. Seek medical help if you feel unwell or the skin swells badly or blisters. Stay out of the sun until all signs of redness have gone.

If you have lots of moles or freckles, your risk of getting skin cancer is higher than average, so take extra care. Avoid getting caught out by sunburn. Use shade, clothing and a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 to protect yourself. Keep an eye out for changes to your skin. Changes to check for include a new mole, growth or lump; any moles, freckles or patches of skin that change in size, shape or colour. Report these to your doctor as soon as possible. Skin cancer is much easier to treat if it's found early.

It's illegal for people under the age of 18 to use sunbeds, including in tanning salons, beauty salons, leisure centres, gyms, and hotels.