

the **SHAPE** Guide



Happy (Safe) Summer!

Yes, everyone wants to have fun in the sun. But the steamy season can also present some serious health challenges—including a few you'd never expect. Read on to get prepared. **BY LISA FIELDS**

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CAUTION: BEWARE OF THESE HIDDEN HAZARDS

1/ FLIP-FLOPPING AROUND

For the same reasons you love flip-flops (they're easy to slip into and feel like nothing on your feet), doctors urge you to be wary. According to research recently published in the *Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association* (APMA), **these flimsy sandals can alter your gait, leading to ankle sprains and foot problems like plantar fasciitis**, an inflammation of the tissue connecting the heel bone to the toes. You also risk ending up with permanently wider feet, since the shoes can cause soles to splay out and loosen your ligaments over time, says APMA spokeswoman Megan Leahy, D.P.M., a Chicago-based podiatrist. So wear flip-flops in moderation (up to one hour of cumulative walking per day), and spend the rest of your time in more structured footwear.

2/ HANGING WITH A SUPERFAN

Next time your boyfriend's favorite baseball team wins in a down-to-the-wire game, make sure you take the

wheel on the drive home. A study from North Carolina State University found that **fatal traffic accidents following college and professional sporting events are more frequent after a close score** than when the game was a blowout. Researchers blame a spike in testosterone levels, which is linked to aggression, says study author Stacy Wood, Ph.D. If your guy won't fork over the car keys, she suggests buying him a soft drink and making him chill with it before leaving the stadium. Not only will that give him some time to calm down, but the sugar should help lower his testosterone levels. And if you're the one who's ultra-competitive? Be prepared to let someone else drive.

3/ FALLING FOR LETTUCE LIES

Salad is a summer staple, but don't assume you can save time by buying the "prewashed" variety. **Studies have found fecal contaminants and other bacteria in bagged lettuce**—even those labeled "triple-washed"—so it's smart to rinse before you eat. It also helps to clean your hands well

TIP Always soak your salad greens before eating—even if the bag says "triple-washed."



with soap and water before handling the leaves, and to choose packages with the latest possible “sell by” date. “The closer to the expiration, the more filth we found,” says Urvasi Rangan, Ph.D., director of consumer safety at *Consumer Reports*.

4/ **HOLDING IT**

Yes, Porta Pottis are gross, and the lines for them are generally long. But going thirsty to avoid a bathroom break could make your time at an outdoor concert or festival even more unpleasant. **On a sweltering day, you can become dehydrated and develop heat exhaustion**—characterized by excessive sweating, weakness, dizziness, and nausea. So keep sipping water regularly. A sports drink is also a good pick because it contains electrolytes, like sodium, that you lose when you sweat, says Laura C. Knobel, M.D., a family physician in Walpole, MA. Nibbling on juicy fruit (like watermelon) works too,

especially if you pair it with a salty snack (like pretzels or popcorn) to help your body retain fluid. Just avoid diuretics, such as alcohol and caffeine. And when you get the urge to go, don't fight it. Grab some hand sanitizer and tissues, and fearlessly open that plastic door.

5/ **SWIMMING WHILE INTOXICATED**

Tiki bars and beer coolers seem to abound this time of year, but sipping and dipping can be a dangerous mix. **Alcohol is involved in nearly half of all water recreation-related fatalities**, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Not only are imbibers more likely to drown, but they're also at greater risk for injuries like broken limbs, cuts, and scrapes, explains Tess Benham, a spokesperson for the National Safety Council. If you plan to dive into the pool or ocean, stick with H₂O or virgin cocktails.



TIP → *Save the booze for happy hour on dry land.*



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THE OUCH FACTOR

Don't let a sunburn, rash, or bee sting put a damper on your day. Ease the pain with these smart strategies.

→ **WHAT HAPPENED:** You fell asleep in the sun, and now you're as red as a lobster.

→ **Rx:** First, take ibuprofen to tame the throbbing and reduce inflammation, suggests Kavita Mariwalla, M.D., director of dermatologic surgery at Continuum Cancer Center in NYC. Then apply aloe gel—or a paste made with 2 tablespoons cornstarch and 2 tablespoons water—to burned areas. If you opt for the paste, rinse it off after about 10 minutes.

→ **WHAT HAPPENED:** You touched poison ivy.*

→ **Rx:** You need to get rid of the oily residue ASAP, so wash the affected area with rubbing alcohol or a product like **Tecnu Extreme Medicated Poison Ivy Scrub** (\$10; amazon.com), says Steven Lamm, M.D., an internist and faculty member at New York University School of Medicine. Then jump in the shower. If you develop a rash, the CDC recommends treating it with wet compresses,

calamine lotion, or hydrocortisone cream. An oral antihistamine, like Benadryl, can also help with itching. If the rash seems severe—or if it's on extra-sensitive areas like your face or genitals—see a doctor; you may need an oral or injectable steroid.

→ **WHAT HAPPENED:** You stepped on some sea glass and your foot is bleeding badly.

→ **Rx:** Apply firm pressure with a cloth or paper towel for a solid 15 minutes—"no peeking!" says Mariwalla—and the oozing should stop or at least slow dramatically. If it doesn't, get yourself to a doctor; you may need stitches. If you have some **WoundSeal Powder** (\$6; drugstore.com) on hand, apply it first to form an artificial scab and make the trip less messy.

→ **WHAT HAPPENED:** You were attacked by a jellyfish.*

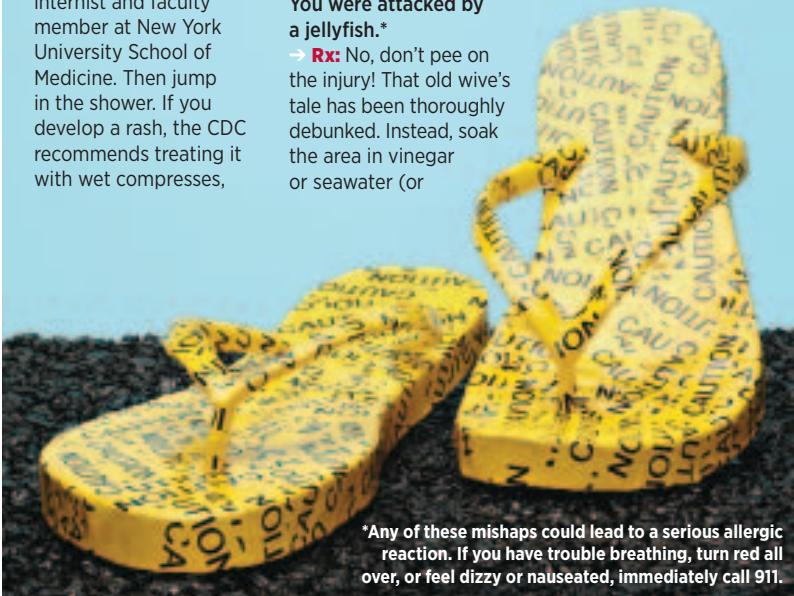
→ **Rx:** No, don't pee on the injury! That old wife's tale has been thoroughly debunked. Instead, soak the area in vinegar or seawater (or

douse repeatedly) for 15 minutes, says Mariwalla, then remove any visible tentacles with tweezers. If you can see any of the tiny venom-containing sacs on your skin, cover them with shaving cream and scrape them away with a credit card. Take ibuprofen regularly for the next 24 hours to reduce pain and inflammation.

→ **WHAT HAPPENED:** You got stung by a bee.*

→ **Rx:** First of all, move out of the area. "When bees sting you, they send out a signal that they're in danger—which is designed to attract more bees," says Mariwalla. Next, use tweezers to remove the venom-filled stinger if it's still in your skin, ice the area to relieve pain, and pop a Benadryl to reduce itching and irritation.

—BARBARA BRODY



*Any of these mishaps could lead to a serious allergic reaction. If you have trouble breathing, turn red all over, or feel dizzy or nauseated, immediately call 911.



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