



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Keep foodborne illness and other poisonings at bay this summer**

*Nation's oldest poison center offers suggestions for the whole family to celebrate summer safely*

**Chicago, IL** (May 21, 2015) – With the upcoming Memorial Day holiday marking the unofficial start to summer, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is encouraging Illinoisans to take precautions against poison exposures, including foodborne illness, while enjoying fun in the sun.

According to the IPC, the combination of long summer days home from school, increase in outdoor celebrations and higher prevalence of insects lead to an increase in accidental exposures.

“Each summer, the IPC sees a 10 to 20 percent higher call volume than compared to the rest of the year, including food poisoning calls,” said IPC Medical Director, Michael Wahl, MD. “The summer is a great time to be outdoors and celebrate with friends and family, but it’s important to be mindful of your surroundings and to properly prepare and store all foods so everyone can enjoy the summer in good health.”

To prevent harmful exposures, the IPC offers the following tips:

- **Food Safety:** Properly prepare, cook and store food to keep bacteria at bay and prevent food poisoning.
  - Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold.
  - Avoid cross-contamination of raw and cooked foods.
  - Cook food as close to serving time as possible to avoid bacterial growth.
  - Refrigerate food within two hours of cooking – if you are unsure how long an item has been out, play it safe and throw it away.
  - Keep coolers in the shade and out of the hot car or trunk.
- **Holiday Celebrations:** Parties are fun but present a number of opportunities for danger both for adults and children.
  - Be sure all tiki torch oils, lighter fluids, fireworks and other flammables are in their original containers, locked up and out of the reach of children. Accidentally drinking tiki torch oils or lighter fluids can be fatal.

- Keep alcohol up and out of the reach of children.
- Do not let children put glow sticks, fireworks or other substances in their mouths.
- Open and use all pool chemicals in a very well-ventilated area and wear eye and skin protection.
- **Cover Up:** Wear clothing that will cover as much exposed skin as possible in order to protect from plant poisonings, like poison ivy, or from insect bites and stings.
- **Creams and sprays:** Sunscreen and bug repellants are crucial summertime staples, but they may contain chemicals that can be harmful.
  - Read all labels and apply according to the directions.
  - Wash hands immediately after application.

For more information on summertime safety, please visit the [IPC Summer Safety page](#).

IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year including holidays. If you have a question, or if someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the IPC at 1-800-222-1222.

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*The **Illinois Poison Center** is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.*