



HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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Health Commissioner Column

TIPS TO REMEMBER WHEN GARDENING THIS SEASON

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO – Gardening offers many benefits including the opportunity to increase physical activity and eat nutritious vegetables. However, there are some important tips to remember to stay safe and healthy this gardening season.

Get vaccinated:

- All adults should get a tetanus vaccination every 10 years. Tetanus lives in the soil and enters the body through breaks in the skin. While using sharp tools to dig in the dirt, and handling plants with sharp points, you are particularly prone to tetanus infections during gardening season.
- Before you start gardening this season, make sure your tetanus/diphtheria (Td) vaccination is up to date.

Dress to protect:

- Wear long sleeves, wide-brimmed hats, sunglasses and sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher for protection from the sun.
- Protect yourself from diseases like West Nile virus and Lyme disease caused by mosquitoes and ticks by using insect repellent containing DEET and also wear long-sleeved shirts and pants tucked in your socks.
- Wear safety goggles, earplugs, gloves, sturdy shoes and long pants as appropriate when using lawn mowers, other machinery, chemicals or sharp tools.

Put safety first:

- Follow instructions and warning labels on chemicals and garden equipment.
- Make sure equipment is working properly and sharpen tools carefully to reduce the risk for injury.
- Pregnant women should be particularly careful to wash hands after gardening and before eating fruits or vegetables from a garden to reduce the risk of Toxoplasma infection.

Watch for heat-related illness:

- Even short periods of time in high temperatures can cause serious health problems. Monitor your activities and time in the sun to lower your risk for heat-related illness.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.

NEWS

- Avoid drinking liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar; these actually cause you to lose more body fluid.
- Take breaks often and stop working if you experience breathlessness or muscle soreness.
- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including extremely high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion or unconsciousness.

Know your limits:

- If you have been inactive, start slow with just a few minutes of physical activity and gradually build up time and intensity.
- If you are taking medications that may make you drowsy or impair your judgment or reaction time, don't operate machinery, climb ladders, or do activities that may increase your risk for injury.
- Listen to your body. Monitor your level of fatigue, heart rate and physical discomfort.

Following these safety precautions will ensure you can stay healthy to enjoy your homegrown produce all season long.

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Tim Ingram is the Health Commissioner for Hamilton County. Hamilton County Public Health works to assure the 450,000 citizens living outside the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale are safe from disease, injury and contamination.