

BY JOANNE TIMMINS

With Memorial Day come and gone, summer is now officially begun. Remember the old rule about wearing white only after Memorial Day? Remember using aluminum reflectors to tan more quickly? Remember rolling around on grassy areas without fear of ticks? Ah, those were the good ole' days.

We at TNCAP are just as eager as the next person to begin making some new happy memories for summer 2015. We too are ready to stream out the door toting all sorts of paraphernalia, food and beverages for summer fun.

We know, however, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' when it comes to summer activities, especially when those activities involve the drink-

ing of alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant drug that affects the central nervous system. The same effects that make it hazardous for driving also make it hazardous for other activities too, like boating and swimming. Our 'ounce of prevention' includes making very careful and informed choices about mixing alcohol with our summer water activities.

It is estimated that one out of two water recreation deaths of adults and teens involves the use of alcohol (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism). Because even moderate use of alcohol can lower inhibitions and increase risk-taking behaviors, it can contribute to swimmers and boaters making poor choices on the water.

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Swimmers may swim out too far from shore; swimmers can slip and fall off or collide with diving boards.

Because alcohol increases drowsiness, small children may not be properly supervised by adults who have been drinking by the beach or pool.

Boaters may drive too fast; ignore water safety rules; forget to wear a life vest; fall overboard. A boat operator with a BAC of 0.1% is 16 times more likely to be killed in a boating accident (NIAA).

Of course, drinking and driving remains a huge concern in the summertime when so many people are traveling. It is estimated that drinking and driving accounts for one death every 51 minutes in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Because alcohol impairs the ability of the brain to react, to track objects in our visual field, to control our motor coordination and balance, to think clearly and problem-solve, the use of equipment and machinery should be avoided while drinking.

Driving a car or motorcycle, operating a lawn mower, climbing a ladder, using an electric saw, riding an amusement park ride, using a gun or bow and arrow--all these are not good ideas with

alcohol in the bloodstream. When planning for family fun, consider leaving the alcohol (including beer, wine and wine coolers) at home.

Have lots of non-alcoholic beverages on hand, especially water. If you must drink, limit yourself to one drink per hour, which gives the body time to metabolize the alcohol.

Provide plenty of food, which can slow the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream and also slow down the rate of drinking.

To keep the fun going 'til Labor Day, pack that ounce of preventative common sense along with the beach towels, beach chairs, sun block, cooler and charcoal. After all, autumn in New York is pretty awesome, too. Stay safe and see you then.

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