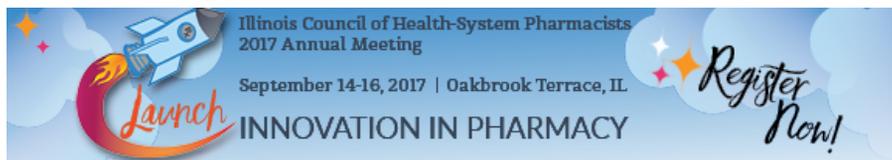




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Directly Speaking It's Summertime!

by Scott A. Meyers, Executive Vice President

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At least by the time you read this it will be meteorological summer, which is June, July and August. Astronomical summer lags behind slightly beginning on June 21 this year or around this date every year. Regardless, as I write this in mid-May, the temperature outside is 46°F, and the rain clouds look like they could dump a couple of inches of snow on us at any time. But that's weather in the Midwest. If you don't like it, wait a half-hour, and it will change significantly.

But because summer is upon us, it's time to do a little cleaning of the medicine cabinet. For me, summer means golf and with it, the need for sunscreen, acetaminophen and ibuprofen. So my first step is to check the expiration dates and inventory levels of my stock of all of them and make sure I'm prepared for the first of hopefully many outings.

With regard to sunscreen, I personally get a sunburn if I talk about golf, so I use the strongest stuff I can find. Even though the literature says that 30 SPF is all you need because anything higher doesn't protect you any better or longer. Guess what? I don't believe the literature plus knowing what the SPF number represents, I'm not going to be able to finish a round of 18 holes in the time 30 SPF gives me. You see, 30 SPF means that a thorough application will last 150 minutes in full sun. Well that's 2.5 hours, and for those of you who don't play golf, a round of 18 holes usually takes about 4 hours on a good day, 5½ to 6 hours at a 4-person scramble. So I use 70-100 SPF (they now make a 110 SPF, believe it or not) sunscreen and ride in a covered cart (if I'm not walking the course) and pray that the coverage lasts. Your needs may not be as serious as mine, but my recommendation is to always wear sunscreen if you plan on being out for more than 15 minutes in full sun. And if anyone can find a non-greasy, non-tacky sunscreen, please let me know. I've been looking for one since sunscreens became mainstream, and I've yet to find one. But sticky and slippery is better than red and in pain. And the permanent damage the sun can cause is even worse down the road.

After you've checked on your sunscreen and pain products, it's probably a good idea to look through your first aid supplies. It seems like summertime brings more frequent needs for Band-Aids and antiseptic cream. Whether it's cuts caused by weeding the flower beds or trimming the trees or burns from the barbecue grill, these items come in handy. There's nothing worse than going to the medicine cabinet for a regular size Band-Aid only to find either 3 inch gauze pads or the Band-Aids you used to use to cover a zit in high school! Meet the need before you bleed!

A couple of chemical ice packs are probably worth keeping on hand, too. For the pulled muscle from that first practice round of golf, first long ride on the bike or the first attempt at getting out of the hammock in one quick, smooth move. There will be athletically related fails during the summer, and sprains and strains are part of the territory.

Don't forget the potential for food poisoning increases in the summer as we leave the potato salad sitting out just a little too long or don't handle the chicken properly and don't quite grill it long enough. Loperamide (Imodium or generic equivalent) and bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto or generic equivalent) come in handy for the simple GI upset that occasionally surfaces. Hopefully you won't see anything serious, but those two items are always good to have around at the beginning of the summer. Chances are they're already in your medicine cabinet but again, check the dates and the quantities! You don't want to run out of either in the middle of the night!

Finally, with summer comes mosquitos, poison ivy and other skin irritants that make the best time of the year in Illinois just a little more challenging. But no worries, a small tube of 1% hydrocortisone cream will help relieve any bites, stings or itches until you can get to the doctor if needed. At least our mosquitos don't carry the Zika virus and aren't the State bird like in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Or at least as far as we know, they don't carry Zika yet. So don't let the mosquitos or any of the other potential summertime maladies keep you indoors and out of the fun! Get out there and enjoy this summer...all three weeks of it, the way this year's weather has been going! But first do a little spring cleaning to make your summertime medicine cabinet ready to go. Meet the need before you bleed, burn, itch, or whatever!