

# Advocacy | Availability | Compassion | Prevention

Practicing in Boca Raton and the Surrounding Community Since 1979

## SUMMER 2025 - NEWSLETTER

**Steven E. Reznick, M.D. FACP**

7280 W. Palmetto Park Rd., Suite 205 N, Boca Raton, FL 33433

**561-368-0191**

Blog: <https://bocaratonconciergedoctor.wordpress.com/>

### **Sunscreen Preventing Skin Cancer: The Best from *Consumer Reports***

We spend far more time outdoors in the summer in most locales. Sun exposure increases during these months and it remains the leading cause of skin cancers. The application of sunscreen in advance of sun exposure, plus staying outdoors in shaded areas plus avoiding sun during the peak hours of sun exposure 10AM to 4PM are the best methods to avoid skin cancers. There are tight woven clothing materials that prevent sun exposure as well.

Each summer Consumer Reports performs extensive laboratory testing using commercially available sunscreens and reports and lists the best products available. In recent years sunscreen use has increased dramatically. With its use, concerns have been raised about the possibility that chemicals in the sunscreen are being absorbed into our bodies and causing harm. The state of Hawaii has banned certain sunscreens that contain certain chemicals which destroy their coral reefs. American Academy of Pediatrics suggests avoiding sunscreens containing Oxybenzone in children even though there is no research evidence supporting the hypothesis that it causes harm in humans. The American Academy of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends that pregnant women avoid sunscreens containing retinol or retinyl palmitate. There are additionally concerns about the carcinogen benzene being found in sunscreen spray products despite the fact that it is not included in the product or present in the same product in lotion, stick or ointment form.

For those concerned about sunscreens and chemicals there are the barrier mineral sunscreens containing titanium and zinc oxide. Mineral sunscreens are far less effective than chemical sunscreens but their constituents do not get systemically absorbed.

When purchasing a sunscreen, you want to buy a product that lists an SPF (sun protective factor) at 30-50. Consumer Reports suggests you check the expiration date on the product before applying it. The products' effectiveness does diminish over time. Apply it at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. Shake the bottle first to distribute the chemicals. Put about one ounce or teaspoon on your face, another ounce on your neck. Allot one ounce for each arm and hand and leg and an ounce for your abdomen and another for your chest. Make sure to reapply the sunscreen every two hours and after swimming.

This year the top products per *Consumer Reports* are:

1. Coppertone Water Babies Lotion SPF 50. \$8.88
2. La Roche-Posay Anthelios Kid Lotion SPF 50. \$24.75
3. Eucerin Advanced Hydration. SPF 50. \$15.99
4. Everyday Humans Oh My Bod SPF 50. \$15.25
5. SuperGoop Play Everyday Lotion SPF 50. \$24

The best sunscreen is really the sunscreen you apply and use correctly. Enjoy the outdoors and sunshine, just please do it safely.

## Heat Related Illnesses

Part of the joy of summer is getting to spend more time in the outdoors. This exposes us to heat and humidity and can under the wrong circumstances lead to heat related illnesses from fatigue to muscle cramps and spasms to heat stroke with organ failure. Our body generates heat through the work of our muscles performing their normal function and the normal metabolic production of energy. We dissipate heat by having the blood vessels near the skin dilate and bring the blood near the surface. Temperatures generated by the body are lowered by sweat being produced and evaporating. Additional methods include conduction and convection with warmer skin being exposed to a cooler atmosphere and cooler objects. If the humidity is high (above 60-70%), and the temperature outside higher than our body temperature these mechanisms are ineffective and impaired. Senior citizens are further impaired by our body not dilating its blood vessels near the skin surface and shunting blood peripherally to cool down as well as we used to as younger adults. Medications which are commonly prescribed impede the process. These include blood pressure medicines such as ACE inhibitors, diuretics, beta blockers and alpha-adrenergic drugs. It includes anti-depressants. It includes alcohol. There are additional factors including being accustomed to the environmental temperature and acclimated, being well hydrated, your level of fitness, the clothing you are wearing and your level of obesity.

To prevent heat related illnesses experts recommend doing any outside work or activity before 10AM and after 4PM. Wear light color clothing to reflect the sun's rays and if it is loose fitting that is even better. A wide brimmed hat is an asset. Stay well hydrated. Drinking a glass of water every half hour that you are outdoors helps keep you well hydrated. Seeking shade rather than direct sunlight is also a method to reduce heat exposure.

If you feel lightheaded or develop a headache, nausea or weakness it's time to get inside into air conditioning. If that is not available, try to get into the shade. It is necessary to cool down. I like Cold Water Immersion but if a swimming pool, shower or ice bath is not available then ice packs on the neck, underarms area and groin plus a watering down with a hose is a great first step. Calling 911 and having them evaluate you, check for a patent airway, breathing normally and adequate circulation while getting a core temperature is always encouraged. If EMS suggests transferring to the hospital ER, please go. The body cannot handle a rectal or thermistor core temperature of 105 degrees centigrade for very long before your muscles break down, your brain and kidneys fail, your inflammatory system creates diffuse bleeding and your lungs fill up with fluid.

Taking appropriate precautions and common sense can allow you to enjoy the long days of sunshine and outdoor fun but please take precautions to prevent heat related illnesses.

## Outdoor Time in Summer Results in More Exposure to Flying Insects and Ticks

We spend more time outside in the spring, summer and early fall. The outdoors time leaves us exposed to mosquito bites and increasingly to tick bites. These vermin carry and transmit diseases such as West Nile Virus, Lyme Disease, Zika Virus, Chikungunya Virus, Dengue Fever, Yellow Fever, Ehrlichiosis, Babesiosis. To prevent getting bitten, there are a multitude of products advertised but some are more effective than others.

Consumer Reports performs extensive testing each year. Volunteers put their arm and hand into an enclosure with 2000 disease free mosquitoes for five minutes to check the number of bites. This is repeated after the application of insect repellents to test the effectiveness of the insect repellents. Their research results suggest that you should be looking for a product that contains the chemical DEET at a concentration of 15-30 %. If you wish to avoid DEET there are effective products using 15% Picardin which work. If you prefer a more natural product they suggest using oil of lemon eucalyptus at a 30 % concentration.

Their top four recommended products include:

1. Ben's Tick and Insect Repellent Wipes
2. Ben's Tick and Insect Repellent Wilderness Formula Pump,
3. Off Sport Deep Woods Insect Repellent
4. Repel Lemon Eucalyptus Oil Spray.

They noted the Eucalyptus spray can be applied to your clothes with minimal risk of staining them.

*Consumer Reports* also evaluated devices to reduce mosquito exposure. If you are sitting outside, they suggest turning on a fan or fans with this method far more effective than bug killing lamps and lights. *Consumer Reports* additionally suggested that products which combined sunscreen with insect repellents were not very effective. Citronella candles and lamps were considered extremely ineffective as well.

## Seltzer for Hydration (additional info regarding general hydration?)

As a boy visiting my paternal grandparents, "Poppi and Dora" there was always a case of those blue glass bottles filled with seltzer. They drank it plain. They drank it with flavoring, and they used it as a weapon at times. If my language or my brother's or my dad's got a bit too colorful, they pressed down on that handle and a firehose type spray of bubbly delivered a cold and wet fizzy message that we needed to clean our act up. Those bottles were expected to be returned when they were empty and there was a deposit on them. At times as kids, we roamed the streets collecting stray seltzer bottles and cans to collect the cash deposit upon returning them. As we grew older, and moved on, our own seltzer delivery man disappeared as did the financial deposit money in favor of supermarket cans and plastic bottles.

In the absence of seltzer delivery, I was surprised to see an article in *Time* magazine touting old fashioned seltzer water as an excellent liquid for hydration. Summer is around the corner and with rising temperatures and humidity comes the need to increase our liquid intake to replace fluids lost through sweat and breathing. Seltzer, it turns out, is an excellent choice. It is devoid of calories and with the carbonation is still absorbed as quickly as plain water. If you are avoiding salt you need to check the label to ensure the presence of the sodium chloride will not exceed your limit. If it is flavored, you hope to find a product with real fruit juice rather than artificially flavored products. In the words of Dr David Poppers, a gastroenterologist at NYU Langone Health, "Seltzer or carbonated water is generally beneficial because we are all under-hydrated. "He believes "drinking seltzer is beneficial for helping with regular bowel movements and constipation." Nutrition expert DJ Blatner feels "drinking 1- 3 cans of plain seltzer per day will be safe for most people especially if it helps them meet their hydration goals."

There are some negatives to consider when drinking seltzer. It is slightly acidic, and this may wear down the enamel on your teeth. To get some perspective on this, it is far less acidic than a can of regular or diet soda. DJ Blatner recommends after drinking your bubbly water you drink plain water to prevent the seltzer from sticking to your teeth.

Additionally, we know seltzer can reduce lower esophageal muscle contractility leading to reflux of stomach contents up the esophagus and contribute to heartburn. The carbonation can cause bloating in some people which can be uncomfortable. This bloating effect is diminished greatly if you sip slowly rather than drinking it rapidly. Some individuals with an overactive bladder will experience urinary urgency and frequency if the carbonation irritates their bladder lining.

If you add up the pros and cons, seltzer is a safe and calorie free beverage for most if you sip it slowly.

## Medicare Part D and Emergency Utilization Authorization

It is popular in today's political world and the social media podcast world to minimize the effect of a COVID infection. There are still 350 people dying each week in the United States from this infectious disease. That is a significant number to me.

I received a phone call from an 85-year-old patient of mine surviving life with asymptomatic non obstructive heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, atherosclerosis of her peripheral arteries causing pain when walking and severe lower back disease and spinal stenosis. When she became a patient, she was already seeing a cardiologist, pulmonologist and pain management physician. She takes three drugs for blood pressure control, two drugs to control her heart rate, rhythm and prevent angina symptoms, an antidepressant, a pain pill and a sleeping pill. She called me this week with a fever, cough, runny nose, aches and pains. I asked her to run a home COVID and Flu test now commercially available and the COVID test showed positive on two tests.

Elderly patients with multi system lung and heart disease need an antiviral independent of their COVID vaccine status. There are two commercially available products in the USA, Paxlovid and Lagevrio. Paxlovid is a great drug, but it interacts with multiple common standard prescriptions and over the counter medications. Some medications taken with Paxlovid require increasing the usual dosage. Others require stopping it, lowering the dosage, or increasing the time period between taking the dosages. To sort this out I usually rely on the Drug Interactions software on several online sites. Drugs.com is available to everyone. I subscribe to several others. You list the medications and hit "view interactions" and the information you need appears. On all three websites I accessed prescribing Paxlovid would cause issues with six of her normal medications. I tried the same process with Lagevrio and no interactions existed. For this reason, I sent in a script for Lagevrio. I explained to the patient that she would need to take four capsules twice a day for five days and start the medication within five days of the onset of her symptoms. We then called her pharmacy to make sure they were stocking it. In the "Freedom State" of Florida, with all the anti-science sentiment, pharmacies do not always carry these products anymore. Fortunately, they had it.

Two hours later the patient called to say that since Emergency Utilization Authorization for Lagevrio and Paxlovid had not been renewed by the President, her insurer would not cover it. The cost for five days was \$1200. She said she could not afford it and would not pay that much even if she could. We called the insurer and explained the problem. They promised to move quickly and get back to me. Quickly ended up being five hours later when a person reading off a script questioned me as if I had ten products to choose from and I chose one that was not their preferred choice. I explained the difference and thought I had gotten through when she asked me for my fax number. Twenty-four hours later I received the standard fax form to explain why I was choosing a product not on their formulary. I filled it out quickly and added a short letter explaining the reason for the limited choices and the time requirement necessitating this to be approved quickly. I am still waiting for an answer.

My patient worked her whole adolescent and adult life, as did her late husband, and paid into the system whatever due. She did not expect Express Scripts and Cigna to desert her when she asked for what she paid for. The decision not to renew emergency utilization authorization or fast track FDA approval of these meds and COVID vaccines leaves many financially vulnerable. Write to your Congress person and Senator if you are as disappointed and angry as I am.

**Steven E. Reznick, M.D. FACP**

7280 W. Palmetto Park Rd., Suite 205 N, Boca Raton, FL 33433

**561-368-0191**

Blog: <https://bocaratonconciergedoctor.wordpress.com/>