By this time of the year, most of us are ready for longer days and the chance to do outdoorsy kinds of things. For all its bad press, the sun offers us much in the way of health enhancement. It’s a natural mood booster, especially for those who are sensitive to light/dark cycles. Those who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) will find that their symptoms improve or go away completely when the days are clear and bright.

Ultraviolet light can also be helpful in that it kills harmful bacteria. Drying clothes outdoors makes them smell fresher partly for this reason. Getting limited amounts of direct sunlight each day can also help clear up diaper rash and other minor skin problems.

The sun is also a great source of vitamin D, a nutrient essential for helping us utilize calcium. People who engage in weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, and who get regular sun exposure improve the health of their bones. The warmth of the sun can also help ease tired muscles and reduce joint pain. Also, playing in the sun is just plain fun.

All that fun doesn’t come without a price tag, however. Those same rays that can make us smile and sanitize our sheets can also damage our skin or cause other health risks.

To help offset these risks, ALWAYS apply a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 at least 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every few hours thereafter for as long as you’ll be exposed. It’s important to note that a sunscreen doesn’t prevent sun damage. It simply allows you more time in the sun before any damage begins. For this reason, you need to know how long you can normally be in the sun without any protection before you begin to turn red. Let’s say your skin begins to turn red after 15 minutes. If you apply a sunscreen with an SPF of 30, you now can stay in the sun for 15 x 30 or 450 minutes before the damage begins. So, the SPF doesn’t indicate how strong the product is, but rather, how long it provides protection.

Try to schedule activities for early morning or later afternoon. The time between 10 and 3 is when the sun is at its most intense.

Wear protective clothing such as a large-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Also, cover as much skin with clothing as possible. Certain fabrics, especially if they are light in color, will still allow the ultraviolet rays to penetrate them, so it is possible to get a burn through your T-shirt.

Keep your cool, especially if you’re engaging in strenuous activity. Heat exhaustion can occur when you lose too much salt and water from your body. If you don’t take a break to cool down and rehydrate, you run the risk of developing heat stroke, a potentially fatal condition.

Careful planning, wearing appropriate protective clothing, and using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 will help insure that you have as much fun in the sun as you want while reducing your likelihood of suffering the consequences of unprotected exposure.

You can enjoy a long, healthy, happy relationship with the sun if you follow some basic precautions.
Don’t Let Nature’s Little Terrors Terrorize You

Almost everyone likes some type of movie, and many of you may enjoy a good B-horror flick from time to time. Some of the best ones from that category involve bugs on steroids, whether from greedy corporations dumping toxic waste or from extraterrestrial interference. The ants and spiders and flies starring in these films grow to enormous proportions and wreak havoc on civilization.

When they’re not on the big screen, however, their ordinary counterparts can truly wreak havoc and cause discomfort and diseases. It’s during the warmer months of the year when we’re most likely to encounter some of these creatures because they and we tend to be most active in the same environments.

Ticks

These toxic, blood-sucking, eight-legged parasites range in size from about the size of a pinhead to disgustingly large (especially when gorged on blood). Ticks are opportunistic and will feast on the blood of any creature unfortunate enough to cross paths with them. We typically think of them attaching to our pets or to wildlife, but we’re fair game, too. The most common tick-borne diseases in the United States are Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Babesiosis, Ehrlichiosis, Relapsing Fever, Colorado Tick Fever, Tularemia, and Tick Paralysis.

There currently are no vaccines available for any tick-borne disease, so you should take precautions if you will be entering tick-infested areas. Avoid trails that are overgrown and have bushy vegetation. Wear light-colored clothing so that you can more easily see the ticks. Wear long pants tucked into your socks or boots and closed-toe shoes. Use a good tick/insect repellent that contains DEET. Check for ticks often and remove them as soon as possible using tweezers. Grasp them firmly near the head and remove quickly. When engorged or agitated, ticks will release a toxin into its host. This toxin can result in paralysis or even death.

Spiders

The overwhelming majority of spiders in Oklahoma do more good than harm, but their appearance often freaks out the squeamish and feint of heart. Two kinds that will bite and can inflict serious injury on humans are the brown recluse and the black widow. Both types of spiders prefer warm, dry climates and areas where they won’t be disturbed, such as woodpiles, closets, basements, or attics. Brown recluse spiders are not aggressive, but their habit of hiding in bedding, clothing, boxes, and other things that humans tend to use without checking mean that we may make them feel threatened which results in a bite.

The bite of the black widow feels like a pinprick, and the victim may actually see the fang marks on the affected area. Symptoms include immediate pain, burning, swelling, and redness. If bitten, seek medical attention immediately.

Unlike the bite of the black widow, the bite of the brown recluse may not hurt immediately. For this reason, people may delay seeking treatment when symptoms do appear because they don’t connect them to the spider. Symptoms may include reddened skin at the bite site. A blister may also form at the site. After a while, mild to intense pain and itching may occur. The venom is a type that causes necrosis or destruction of the surrounding tissues that can be difficult to lime and which may take months to heal.

Some people experience a systemic (whole body) response to a brown recluse bite. Their symptoms include fever and chills, a skin rash all over the body with tiny, flat purple and red spots, nausea/vomiting, and joint pain.

Death from either type of spider is rare. Young children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems are at greatest risks.

Keep living spaces clean and uncluttered. Use caution around woodpiles and storage sheds. Hire a professional exterminator if you have an infestation of these spiders.
More Tiny Terrors

Mosquitoes

Look up in the sky! It’s a bird! It’s a plane! It’s a horde of mosquitoes! One of the peskiest creatures of summer is also one of the most deadly. With multiple species world-wide, mosquito-borne diseases have killed more people than all the wars in history (Illinois Department of Public Safety). In the United States, people and certain animals are at risk for contracting West Nile Virus, St. Louis encephalitis, California encephalitis, and in rare cases, malaria. In addition to the devastation they can wreak on humans, they are also responsible for transmitting heart-worms in dogs.

Mosquitoes are attracted to carbon dioxide (they can detect it from 75 feet away), so any outdoor gathering or strenuous activity can mark you as an appealing target. But it’s only the females who are out to get you. They need your blood in order to reproduce. Male mosquitoes feed on flower nectar.

Practice these f D’s to help keep yourself safe from these potentially deadly pests:

- **Dawn and Dusk**—This is when mosquitoes are most active, so avoid being outdoors.
- **Dress**—Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- **DEET**—If you must be outside, use an insect repellent containing up to 30% of DEET. Other effective mosquito repellents include picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and IR3535.
- **Drain**—The lifecycle of all mosquitoes includes water. Reduce your risks by eliminating mosquito breeding sites. Even water left in a pet dish can be home to mosquito larvae.

Ants

Ants come in a variety of sizes and colors, but anything that is referred to as a “colony” or an “army” should command your attention. At best, ants are a nuisance overtaking your kitchen looking for sweets or spoiling the picnic you’re having with your family. Some ants, however, can do some damage with a severe bite or sting. For some, this sting can produce an allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This sudden, severe reaction can cause the throat to swell, blocking the airway. With up to half a million or more members in one colony, eradication often requires professional extermination.

Scorpions

While few people die or suffer egregious effects from scorpion stings, the experience can be very uncomfortable. Symptoms include immediate pain or burning, very little swelling, sensitivity to touch, and numbness and tingling. Scorpions are most active at night, so people often are not aware that a sting is the source of their pain. If you are stung by a scorpion, take immediate action.

1. Wash the area of the sting with soap and water.
2. Apply a cool compress such as ice wrapped in a wash cloth. Alternate leaving the compress on for 10 minutes and off for 10 minutes.
3. If stung on an arm or leg, elevate the limb to heart level.
4. If you develop symptoms such as numbness or tingling of the extremities or face, blurry vision, muscle twitching, or roving eye movements, go to the nearest emergency room. Young children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems should go to the emergency room right away.

The best preventative measures for keeping scorpions at bay are to eliminate the places where they may hide (loose boards, debris, etc.) and their food source (insects and other bugs). It’s not uncommon to occasionally see these pests in or around your home, but if their numbers are problematic, you may need an exterminator. If you’re out hiking/camping, take care to check shoes and clothing before you put them on, check bedding, and other dark inviting places where scorpions can hide.
Student Support Services houses a variety of services designed to enhance the performance and well-being of students at Oklahoma City Community College.

- Services to Students with Disabilities, including providing accommodations for documented disabilities, interpreting and captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing students, and assistive technology.
- Professional counseling by a licensed provider.
- Learning support specialist to assist with academic needs such as learning styles, study skills, test-taking, and general health and wellness issues.
- TRIO Grant Programs (Upward Bound and Trio Student Support Services) designed to help first generation college students learn more about college before they arrive and how to be more successful once they are here.

For more information about our services and how to access them, please visit our website at http://www.occc.edu/support/ or call us at 682-7520. We are located on the first floor of the Main Building near SEM Entry 3.

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Grilled Spiced Chicken with Caribbean Citrus-Mango Sauce

- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon each of ground cumin and ground anise seed
- 1 dash cayenne pepper
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup basmati rice
- 1 mango—peeled, seeded, and diced
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 1/2 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons dark rum

1. In a medium bowl, mix the ginger, cinnamon, cumin, anise, and cayenne pepper. Rub the chicken with the spice mixture. Place the chicken in bowl, cover, and refrigerate 20 to 30 minutes.

2. Combine 2 cups of water and basmati rice in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 20 minutes or until tender.

3. In a small saucepan, mix the mango, orange juice, lime juice, and honey. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. In a small cup, mix cornstarch with 1 1/2 tablespoons of water until cornstarch is dissolved. Stir into mango mixture and simmer for one minute or until sauce has thickened slightly. Stir in dark rum.

4. Preheat an outdoor grill for medium heat. When the grill is hot, brush the grate with oil.

5. Grill chicken 6 to 8 minutes per side until the chicken is no longer pink and the juices run clear.

6. Serve over the cooked rice and top with the mango sauce.

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