Enjoying Independence Day Festivities With MS

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Surviving Independence Day Festivities with MS

Regular days, with usual daily activities, can cause stress for an MS sufferer. Even more challenges can occur during a holiday such as July 4th, as you may organize or attend a party, or just spend more time outdoors on a hot summer day. You may want to use some of the following tips to prevent the aggravation of MS.

Avoid Too Much Time in the Sun

Heat and humidity are well-known triggers of MS symptoms. This problem occurs because the damaged nerves don’t work optimally to decrease the core temperature when it’s hot outside. The flare-ups are temporary, but it’s always best to avoid them.

Stay well-hydrated and drink more water during a hot day. Avoid beverages with sugar, caffeine or alcohol because they promote, rather than relieve dehydration. Wear light-colored, loose clothing, a hat and sunglasses. Avoid being fully exposed to the sun's rays and apply cold, wet towels or an ice pack to the skin.

Other things you can do to try to keep cool include wearing a cooling vest or neck rings, going in the swimming pool or taking a quick cool shower if you have the chance. If you tried all of the above and still feel hot, try to go to a cooler place, stay calm and relaxed and breathe deeply.

Avoid Fatigue

Whether you organize or attend a barbecue on July 4th, you will need to spend some extra energy. Plan this event in advance. If you organize the party, try to buy already prepared foods. Plates with sliced fresh fruits and vegetables are available in most grocery stores.

Use plastic cups, plates, forks and knives to limit the amount of time spent for cleaning after the party and ask your family and friends for help. Avoid standing on your feet too much by sitting on a chair when cooking or when you socialize with your guests.

If possible, try to avoid hosting an event, and if you can choose between attending a barbecue or a picnic, choose the latter, as you're more likely to be able to lie down in the shade.

Coping with Eating Troubles

If you have problems eating, rather than eating a large meal choose to have frequent small meals. Blend fruits and vegetables rather than having to chew them. Use a sour candy if you feel your mouth is dry, as it will promote the production of saliva.

Pay attention to your posture and keep your spine straight while eating. Fatigue also aggravates swallowing

problems, so sleep well, and avoid getting tired during the day. A speech language pathologist can recommend some exercises to keep your muscles of the throat strong and function at its best.

If you experience severe symptoms or develop new symptoms like blurred vision, excessive numbness, tingling, fatigue, dizziness or confusion call your doctor or go to the hospital as soon as possible.