



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Top Tips for a Safe Summer in Upstate New York

PATTY RITCHIE July 6, 2016



From boating and fishing to camping and hiking, there's nothing quite like summer in Central and Northern New York. But, it's important that as we enjoy all our region has to offer, we take steps to responsibly have fun. Keep your family safe this summer by following the below tips:

**Take a stand against ticks:** Lyme disease, an infection caused by a bacteria spread by the bite on an infected tick, is particularly prevalent in our area of the state—and that's why we need to take extra caution to protect ourselves from this serious risk. To safeguard yourself from

ticks, be sure to take extra caution when in high grass or wooded areas, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when outdoors and check yourself regularly, paying special attention to your scalp, the backs of knees, behind your ears and your back. As a member of the Senate's Task Force on Lyme and Tick Borne Diseases, I'm working to spread the message of protection and prevention when it comes to diseases carried by ticks, and you can read more about my efforts on my website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).

**Practice safe boating:** They may not be glamorous, but lifejackets sure are important. When out on the water, all children under the age of 12 need to be wearing a lifejacket, and there needs to be enough lifejackets for all persons on board in case of an emergency. When on a jet-ski, you must be wearing a lifejacket, and when on a kayak, you must have one on the kayak with you.

**Stay hydrated:** Dehydration is dangerous, and it can happen very fast, especially in the warm weather. In hot temperatures, experts recommend drinking between two and four glasses of cool, non-alcoholic, low-sugar fluids every hour, even if you're not feeling particularly thirsty. And, you should consume more if you are engaging in physical activity.

**Safeguard yourself from the summer sun:** After months of cold and snow, most of us look forward to enjoying the sun's warmth. However—it's important that when doing so, we protect ourselves from its harmful UV rays, as statistics have shown that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer over the course of their lifetime. To safeguard yourself, be sure to always wear sunscreen, and if you are especially prone to burning, wear light clothes or a hat as an added level of protection.

**Enjoy campfires responsibly:** Sitting around a campfire is a great summer pastime, but make sure you're doing it responsibly. Before you start your fire, check which direction the wind is blowing, and for fire hazards, such as dry overhanging branches near your fire pit. Next, make

sure to make a fire-proof pit, either by making a barrier with rocks or having your fire in a pre-purchased receptacle that has been deemed fire-safe. Always make sure to have water nearby in case your fire gets out of control, and never leave a burning fire unattended.

**Don't forget to 'Fight the Bite:'** During summer mosquitoes are out in full force—and that means we need to be vigilant about protecting ourselves from the diseases they carry, like EEE, West Nile and Zika. To stay bite-free, make sure you wear long sleeved clothing and pants when mosquitoes are out, check windows and doors in your home to make sure they are adequately screened and sealed, eliminate mosquito breeding areas by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets or barrels, change water in birdbaths regularly and of course, apply bug spray when outdoors.

There are endless opportunities for enjoying summer in our region and it's so important that as we do so, we take steps to stay safe. I hope you'll keep these tips in mind as the season—and its warm weather—continues.