

Staying Safe This Spring

by Lee Batsakis

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It's that time of year when the birds are chirping, the sun stays out a bit longer, and people are eager to get outside and enjoy some fresh air after a long winter. This past winter felt particularly long for many due to the pandemic. However, March 20th marks the first day of spring, and Dr. Sunil Arora, an emergency medicine physician with OSF HealthCare, encourages taking proper safety measures before officially springing into the warmer weather and longer days.

“As the weather warms up, people will want to get outdoors especially after getting through this COVID winter. Take it easy early on. Let your body adapt. Even the best of athletes need a warm up period,” says Dr. Arora.

Dr. Arora recommends proceeding with caution when embarking on a new fitness journey this spring. Additionally, he encourages wearing a helmet and proper shoes when riding a bike, scooter, or rollerblading in order to prevent injury.

“Common injuries are broken bones – leg, arm, wrists. We see a lot of broken wrists when people fall from anywhere. Head injury is a common one, too. Hopefully everyone is wearing a helmet but if you were not wearing a helmet and get a significant head injury that might be a time to come in,” cautions Dr. Arora.

In addition to taking proper safety measures when it comes to getting active outside, Dr. Arora also advises “grill masters” to use caution when firing up the grill for the first time this season.

“Especially getting the grill out after winter, where it’s stored all winter long – checking your propane tank, making sure everything is connected properly. And then being careful at that first light. You might turn on the gas and think it will light – but then the gas is building up but it is not lighting for whatever reason and then you have that big flame,” Dr. Arora warns.

If you experience any grilling injuries such as a burn this spring, Dr. Arora recommends seeking proper medical attention so it heals properly.

Whether you are running, biking, grilling, or participating in any other sort of outdoor activity this spring, one thing is certain – springtime allergies tend to come along with the warmer weather. While over-the-counter medications and ointments can help aid an allergic reaction, Dr. Arora advises to pay attention to any symptoms you may experience from an allergy caused by the great outdoors – especially if you are someone who has not had springtime allergies in the past.

“They can make someone think of COVID symptom, which is perfectly appropriate. You can have a cough, you can have a runny nose – but fever is usually a good differentiator between an infectious versus an allergic cause for those symptoms. But given that we are still in this pandemic and still figuring out how long it will last, it is important for people to keep a lower threshold to get tested for COVID,” explains Dr. Arora.

If you experience any injury or illness this spring that you are unable to treat at home, go to the closest ER or urgent care center to seek professional medical attention.

For more information on COVID-19, including frequently asked questions, visit the OSF HealthCare COVID-19 digital health hub: www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/. If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and it is not an emergency, you can connect through Clare, a digital assistant available through the OSF [website](#). If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911.