



# News Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Stay Safe This Memorial Day and Summer: Tips to Avoid the Emergency Room** *Trauma Surgeon Urges Caution as Seasonal Activities Increase Injuries*

While summer and travel are practically synonymous for most of us, a trip to the emergency room is never in anyone's plans. For trauma surgeons nationwide, holidays like Memorial Day and summertime have always been busier than the winter months.

"Unfortunately, there's more alcohol usage. There's an increasing incidence of people being out and about and doing fun things again. Those fun things can sometimes come with an increased incidence of injury," said Brittany K. Bankhead, M.D., a trauma surgeon at Texas Tech Physicians and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.

"During the summers, we definitely see an increased incidence of motor vehicle accidents. There are also a lot more boating accidents, water-related injuries and drownings. Boating, skiing and some of our firearm injuries go up as well," she said.

Bankhead emphasized that trauma teams — comprised of surgeons, emergency physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, blood bank personnel and hospital staff — are not just there to save lives. They are equally dedicated to injury prevention, striving to help people avoid a visit to the emergency room.

She noted that taking precautions and extra care will not guarantee that accidents will not happen, but they can ensure that you and your loved ones mitigate them as much as possible.

Bankhead shared the following tips:

- Make it a habit to wear a seatbelt every time. "That one click, that takes about two seconds to do, can mean a matter of life and death sometimes, or really terrible injuries versus not really that bad of injuries," Bankhead stressed.
- Keep kids safe in vehicles by using up-to-date car seats appropriate for the child's size.
- Follow the speed limit. Never drive motor vehicles or watercraft if you are intoxicated.

- Protect that precious brain. Helmets possess the few inches of material that stand between, “Whoops! Get back out there and try again!” and “Your child has suffered a devastating head injury.” Start using them early and use them always.
- Guns should be stored and locked appropriately at all times to avoid deadly injury. “Firearms were made to kill. They’re made to be deadly. So keeping them out of the reach of children and in safe storage is really important,” Bankhead said.
- Burns come in many forms. Safety is essential when using bonfires and campfires, but Bankhead said it’s also important to remember that grills, household chemicals, electrical malfunctions and stray wires can cause burns. Avoid using accelerants on open flames.
- Don’t let your guard down around water. Drowning happens in the blink of an eye. Pool covers and gates only work when they’re secured. Distraction at even the most minor level can lead to a child silently falling beneath the water's surface. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a “water watcher,” even in the presence of a lifeguard, and starting swim lessons at age 1.

Bankhead shared a plea from trauma teams everywhere to donate blood. Summer is typically one of the times when the need is highest and blood bank supplies dwindle.

“We can remove organs that are bleeding, fix holes that need repairing and use multiple forms of life-sustaining measures to get you back to your family. However, if you need a transfusion and blood banks are empty, it makes our job significantly more challenging,” she said.

You never know when it might be you or your loved one on the operating table who needs it.