

Beating the heat

Texans should be cautious when venturing into the summer sun

BY BRIAN FLEMING
The Battalion

It's June again, and yet another Texas summer has begun. Soon enough, 100 degree weather will become commonplace to everyone trying to beat the heat.

With this comes many dangers that often go overlooked. It is vital for anyone under the Texas sun to be aware of easily avoidable conditions and to take the necessary precautions to stay cool and safe.

In the pamphlet "Accent on Health," the Texas Department of Health (TDH) said many signs of heat illness or overexposure to the sun include profuse sweating, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, nausea, weak but rapid pulse and headaches. All can occur and should be taken seriously.

"People with these symptoms should find shade and ventilation and drink water," the TDH said.

The TDH said these symptoms can become serious very quickly if they are ignored.

"If fluids are not quickly replaced, heat stroke can follow causing extremely high body temperature, red and dry skin, rapid pulse, confusion, brain damage, loss of consciousness and eventually death," the TDH said.

Margaret Griffith, Health Education Coordinator for the A.P. Beutel Health Center, also offered some advice for people in the sun.

Griffith said that along with the immediate effects of sun exposure, longer-term effects can occur as well. These could include heat stroke and exhaustion.

Griffith said the most important thing to remember is to drink plenty of water. She said that drinking water can often times be neglected in the presence of certain summer activities, such as swimming or boating.

"The need for water often slips up on people as they are in or around it (water), so it is important for people to be aware that just because you are in water, does not mean you don't need water," Griffith said.

Griffith said people should also be cautious when drinking alcohol in the summer heat.

She said alcohol has an adverse effect in the sun and causes dehydration and should be avoided.

Griffith said soft drinks should probably be

avoided as well. Fruits are often good, including oranges and orange juice, which contain potassium.

Sun exposure can also lead to many other long-term consequences. Skin cancer is among the worst.

The Merick Manual of Medical Information lists skin cancer as the most common form of cancer.

The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) offers literature geared toward skin protection and the prevention of skin cancer. Among the information provided by the AAD is the story of Donald Biederman, who suffered from skin cancer.

According to the AAD article, "Learn from my Mistakes' Urges Skin Cancer Survivor," Biederman visited a dermatologist when he became concerned about a small red spot on his nose.

What followed would change the entire course of his life.

"I was very frightened when they told me that I had a malignancy on my face," Biederman said in the article.

Along with the malignancy on his nose, Biederman learned that the cancer was more extensive than the initial red spot.

"Not only did it take more than 30 skin cancer surgeries to remove the whole tumor, but Biederman also lost his nose and the left side of his face in the process," the AAD said.

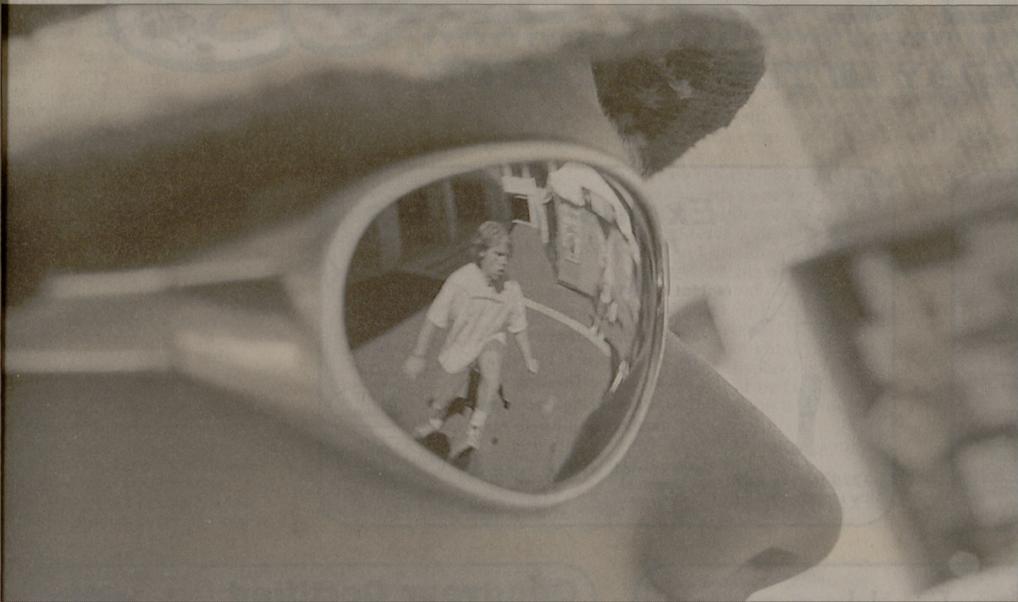
Even though the cancer was curable, Biederman's life will never be the same.

The AAD points out the time of day is a definite factor to consider. When in the sun, they state that certain times can be worse than others.

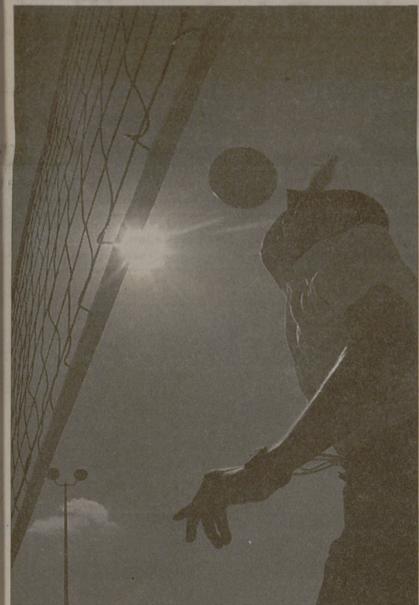
"Avoid peak sunlight hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest," the AAD said.

The AAD also recommends applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor of at least 15, wearing protective, tightly woven clothing, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and avoiding reflective surfaces and tanning beds.

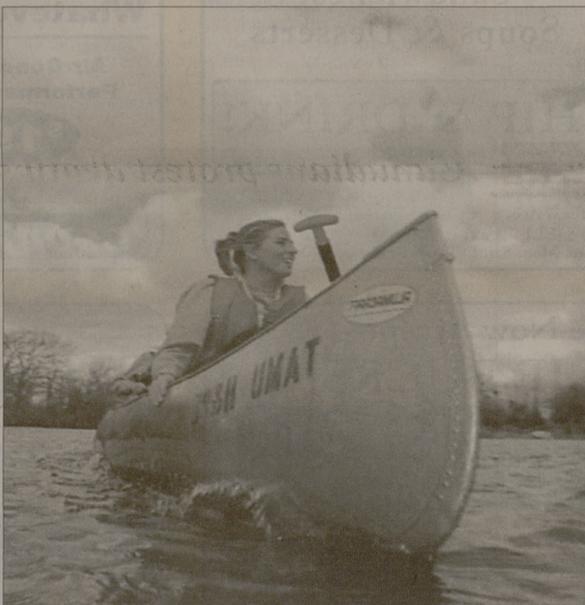
So as this summer begins, it is important for everyone in and out of the sun to remember that it can be harmful. Beating the heat can be done if one is aware of the dangers involved and how to avoid them.



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(From top) David Stroman, a sophomore history major, looks on as Hutch Butler, a senior recreation park and tourism science major, plays hacky sack between classes; Kevin Coffman, a junior computer engineering major, spikes the volleyball at the Student Recreation Center; Tracie Hutzler, a junior business major, practices for a skills test during a canoeing class; J.P. Le Compte, a junior management major, swims to the hoop as Andy Vincent (right), a junior management major, and Chad Lee, a senior history major, go for the block. All three were taking the rest of the day off after finals at the Rec. Center pool. (Right) Logan Edmission, a 13 year old from College Station, plays water basketball to cool off Monday afternoon at the Rec. Center pool.