



spotlight on health

Warm-Weather Tips For Parents With Chronic Conditions

(NAPSA)—School breaks are a great opportunity for parents and children to spend time together.

But for parents with a chronic condition such as multiple sclerosis (MS), managing their own health and well-being while kids are home from school can be a daunting task.

MS affects approximately 400,000 Americans, and it's likely that many of these individuals are parents. Fortunately, there are a number of resources available to help navigate the summer months. Karen D. and Chuck L., who are parents and also have relapsing MS, are MS LifeLines® Ambassadors and are part of the MS LifeLines support network and educational community for people living with MS and their caregivers. MS LifeLines and its Ambassadors are sponsored by EMD Serono and Pfizer Inc.

Karen and Chuck offer these tips that could help other parents with a chronic condition such as MS:

Keep Cool

If heat exacerbates your MS symptoms, enjoy fun activities with your children where you can stay cool. For instance:

- Go to the movies for entertainment and air-conditioning.
- Take advantage of discounted day trips to local aquariums and museums—check the local newspaper for savings.
- Host a pool or backyard party with your friends who have children. Each parent can take a shift watching the children while the other parents can have a break



Karen D., MS LifeLines Ambassador and active mother of three who has relapsing multiple sclerosis, enjoys time with her family.

and stay cool in the shade.

- Try to schedule activities for cooler times of day, such as after 4:00 p.m., when the heat won't be as much of an issue. "The heat can hit me hard. I love to garden and go for walks with my family after dinner when the temperature cools down," says Karen. "Living with MS hasn't hindered what I'm able to do with my children, just changed it a bit."

Teamwork

Remember that it's okay to accept help from others. Here's how to do it:

- If you're having an "off" day, ask friends if your children can spend a few hours at their house so that you can relax. Taking a nap can help you replenish your strength so that you feel alert and in control for the rest of the day.
- If you have older children, allow them to help you in day-to-day situations such as preparing dinner or sweeping the front steps if it's warm out.

Take Advantage of Support Services

Support programs such as MS

LifeLines have online, phone and local programs that can help you identify ways to have fun and stay active with your family during any season.

"I love to go fishing with my sons, but having MS affects my coordination, making it harder to get on and off my fishing boat," says Chuck. "By participating in the MS LifeLines' local educational programs, I learned to not let my MS be a boundary but rather to find ways to alter my activities to make them work for me."

Take Care of "Me" First

Try not to get down on yourself if you simply don't feel up to joining in the fun on some days. For instance, if you wake up and aren't feeling your best, don't feel as though you need to conquer the world that day. Instead, enjoy a fun day indoors with your children. Try making popcorn and shutting off the lights to simulate your own movie theatre and have a movie marathon.

Learn More

You can find more ideas for living well with MS by visiting www.ms lifelines.com/summer or by calling (877) 447-3243. For Chuck, MS LifeLines proved to be an invaluable resource when he was first diagnosed with relapsing MS, and continues to be today. "I enjoy going to the local events and picking up advice from others who are involved in the program. The little tips that I've picked up along the way are what have helped me deal with my MS," he says.