



Camping and Outdoor Safety

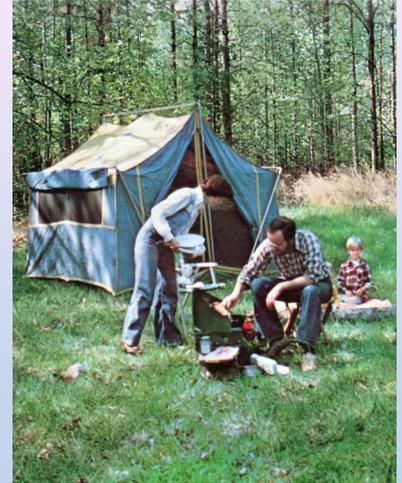
Camping and Outdoor Activity Health and Safety Tips

Camping, hiking, and just generally enjoying the great outdoors with family and friends is a wonderful experience if properly prepared. The following are tips to ensure your camping and outdoor activities are safe and healthy.



Get vaccinated

Vaccinations can help protect against certain diseases and conditions while camping. Check with your doctor or nurse to see if you've had all of the recommended vaccines. He or she may recommend tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), meningitis, and/or hepatitis A, depending on your medical history, destination, and other factors.



Prepare safe food and water

Bring safe and healthy foods along on your camping trip. Eating contaminated food and drinking contaminated water can increase the risk of developing certain infectious diseases caused by germs. Follow these steps to keep your food and water safe:

- Pack foods in tight, waterproof bags or containers. Keep them in an insulated cooler.
- Wash hands and surfaces often. Use hand sanitizer if water is not available.
- Separate raw foods from cooked foods.
- Cook foods to proper temperatures (for instance, ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees).
- Chill foods promptly.



Physical activities

Camping is a great way to get physical activity. Do things such as walking, hiking, biking, or swimming to stay active during your camping trip and:

- Be sure to bring protective gear, such as helmets, sturdy shoes, and life jackets.
- Avoid poisonous plants, like poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac.
- Know your limits, and take steps to avoid injury during activities.
- Never hike or swim alone.
- Watch kids closely.

They're called wild animals for a reason

Some wild animals carry diseases that are dangerous to people. Avoid touching, feeding, and getting near wild animals. Enjoy watching them from a safe distance in their natural surroundings. Keep food stored in sealed containers and out of the reach of animals. Make sure your family pets are vaccinated and always keep a close eye on them. Check for ticks, and remove them promptly. Make sure pets have plenty of water, food, and shelter.



The silent killer

Carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless and can cause illness or death in people and pets. Never use fuel-burning equipment such as gas stoves, heaters, lanterns, and charcoal grills inside a tent, camper, or other enclosed shelter. It can cause dangerous levels of carbon monoxide to build up. As alternative heat sources to fuel-burning appliances inside an enclosed shelter, campers should bring adequate bedding and clothing and should consume extra calories and fluids during the outing to prevent hypothermia (a dangerous loss of body warmth that can cause death).



Those annoying bugs

Mosquitoes, ticks, and other insects can cause certain diseases. To help fight the bite, apply [insect repellent](#) containing DEET to exposed skin. Be sure to follow directions on the package. Check for ticks daily, and remove them promptly. Wear long sleeves, pants, and other light-colored clothing to help prevent and spot ticks more easily.

Prevent temperature-related illness

To help prevent hypothermia during cool nights, bring adequate bedding and clothing to stay warm. Use a plastic ground cloth under your tent to help keep you dry. To help prevent heat-related illness during hot days, drink plenty of alcohol-free and sugar-free fluids. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. Wear layers of light-weight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing. Rest often in shady areas. Protect yourself from too much sun.



Avoid water-related illness and injury

Camping often includes playing in and around the water. To help protect yourself and your fellow campers from illness, don't swim if you have diarrhea, and don't swallow the water you swim in. Take a shower before and after swimming. Never swim alone. If you plan to ride in a boat, canoe, or other water vehicle, be sure to wear a life jacket.

- **Do not swim under the influence of drugs or alcohol**

Being under the influence of either or both seriously impairs judgment and coordination and increases the risk of injury or drowning.

- **Do not swim during thunderstorms**

Lightning often strikes water and water conducts electricity. If you swim and lightning strikes, you risk serious injury or death.



Be prepared

Always prepare for the unexpected. Before you leave, check the weather report, learn about security at your camp location, and tell family and friends your plans. Know what to do when toilets are not available. Be sure to bring along a supply kit that includes a first-aid kit, compass or GPS, map, flashlight, blankets, batteries, food, water, clothes, and medications. Know who to contact at the camp to report issues that may come up. When you return home, check for ticks, skin rashes or sunburn, dehydration, and other problems.

HAPPY CAMPING!

Additional Resources

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.pema.pa.gov>

ReadyPA: www.readypa.org

Weather-Ready nation: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/>

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.ready.gov

American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/prepare>

U.S. Forest Service: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/safety/safety.shtml>

