

The Great Outdoors

Warm Weather Edition

Information for you and people you support with disabilities

Outdoor activities are an important part of life. Here are things to consider to make the great outdoors more enjoyable for all.

Sun Protection

The sun's ultraviolet rays can cause a sunburn in as little as 10 minutes or less of exposure. Limit exposure especially during the hottest parts of the day between 10 AM and 2 PM. Certain medications can increase sensitivity to sunlight and extra caution should be exercised. Consider these precautions:

Sunscreen

- Use SPF (sun protection factor) of 30 or greater
- Apply liberally to all sun-exposed areas including hands, ears, nose, face, neck, arms, legs and feet. If hair is thin or absent, include the scalp as well.
- Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours, more frequently if sweating or swimming

Clothing and accessories

- Utilize clothing that has an SPF rating when available
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat
- Sunglasses should have a UV400 rating of 100%. Dark glasses alone are not sufficient and can cause more damage by causing pupil dilation letting in more UV radiation
- Umbrellas can help provide shade

Medications* that can increase light sensitivity of the skin and/or eyes include certain:

- Antibiotics like tetracycline and ciprofloxacin
- Antidepressants like doxepin (Sinequan) or St John's Wort
- Antifungals like tolnaftate (Lamisil) or Griseofulvin
- Antihistamines like diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or loratadine (Claritin)
- Blood pressure medications like atenolol (Tenormin) or metoprolol (Lopressor)
- Cholesterol medications like atorvastatin (Lipitor) or simvastatin (Zocor)
- Diuretics (fluid/water pills) like hydrochlorothiazide (Microzide) or furosemide (Lasix)
- Diabetes medications like metformin (Glucophage) or exenatide (Byetta)
- Antipsychotic drugs like risperidone (Risperdal) or quetiapine (Seroquel)
- Anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil)
- Antiseizure medications like phenytoin (Dilantin) or carbamazepine (Tegretol)

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- Heart medications like digoxin (Lanoxin) or captopril (Capoten)
- Antiarrhythmics like sotalol (Betapace) or amiodarone (Cordarone)
- Medications to treat stomach ulcers like omeprazole (Prilosec) or famotidine (Pepcid)

Hydration

Fluid loss is greater when people are in warmer climates, participating in physical activities, and actively sweating. Maintaining proper body fluid levels is important. Remember that lack of hydration can increase constipation, as well. Here are some tips:

- Encourage fluid consumption regularly
- Popsicles, sno-cones, and frozen juices can assist in maintaining hydration.
- Fruits and vegetables with lots of juice can help like watermelon, peaches, plums, salad greens, radishes, cauliflower, and others
- Limit sugary and caffeinated beverages
- Consider intake of extra fluids before going outside or participation in physical activities
- Pack a cooler with iced down beverages and cold packs

Signs of dehydration include:

- Skin dryness and tenting (not quickly returning to shape when gently pinched upward)
- Sunken eyes
- No tears
- Darker colored urine
- Decreased urine output
- Change in level of consciousness

Medications* that can increase the risk of dehydration include

- Diuretics (fluid/water pills) like chlorothiazide (Diuril) or hydrochlorothiazide (Hydrodiuril)

Insects

Biting and stinging insects are an outdoor nuisance. Consider these steps to reduce the likelihood of interference with your fun:

- Use insect repellent per manufacturer's instructions. Take caution not to overuse as too much DEET can be harmful to a person
- Cover exposed skin when hiking as possible to reduce tick bites
- Bright colored clothing attracts bees. Light clothing attracts ticks, but repels mosquitoes
- Inspect skin after outdoor activities looking for ticks and other insect bites
- Avoid areas with fire ants
- Be aware of spiders such as the brown recluse and black widow

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- Have epi-pens available, if prescribed, for people who have severe allergic reactions
- Always scrape off a bee or wasp stinger. Do not squeeze or pull out with tweezers

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke

The most important things to do to reduce heat exhaustion and heat stroke are to stay hydrated and limit time in the sun. Freezing damp towels and placing them around a person's neck can help one keep cool. Light colored clothing absorbs less heat and is cooler than dark colors. Certain medications can block the body's ability to cool down naturally and extra precautions should be exercised. Here are signs of heat related conditions:

Heat Exhaustion

- Nausea
- Light-headedness
- Fatigue
- Muscle cramps
- Dizziness

Heat Stroke (This is a medical emergency!)

- Headache
- Confusion
- Absence of sweating
- Rapid heart rate
- Nausea and vomiting
- Loss of consciousness
- Elevated body temperature

A heat stroke is a medical emergency! Here is what to do:

- Call 911 immediately
- Have the person lie down
- Move the person to a shady, cooler area or to an air-conditioned room or vehicle
- Remove tight clothing or extra layers to facilitate cooling while maintaining dignity
- Wipe exposed skin with cool cloths to reduce body temperature
- Do not give oral fluids unless the person is alert and fully conscious

Untreated heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke. When signs are noted, seek medical assistance and help the person cool down using the steps above.

Medications* that can affect the body's ability to cool down include certain:

- Diuretics (fluid/water pills) can cause loss of fluid volume and dehydration
- Blood pressure medications can increase risk of fainting

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- Antidepressants can cause increased sweating and fluid loss
- Antihistamines can reduce sweating
- Anticholinergics like benztropine (Cogentin) can reduce sweating
- Asthma drugs like tiotropium bromide (Spiriva) can reduce sweating and increase heart rate
- Antipsychotics can reduce the brain's ability to regulate body temperature

Safety

Here are some general safety items to consider:

- Uneven ground increases the risk of tripping and falling
- Wear proper footwear for the activity (for example, do not wear flip-flops for a hike)
- Pool areas can be slippery as can mossy rocks near a lake or stream
- Avoid poisonous plants such as poison ivy, oak, and sumac
- Do not ingest plants and berries as many are poisonous
- Pay attention to pollen counts when people have allergies
- When humidity is higher, it is harder for a person to cool off which can increase the risk of dehydration and heat exhaustion
- Blisters can occur from shoes or ill-fitting clothing. Ensure correct fit and monitor for their appearance
- Be aware of hazardous wildlife including snakes, spiders, bears, scorpions, and others in your area
- Have epi-pens available whenever someone is known to have severe allergic reactions. Always have 2 pens in case you need to repeat a dose before emergency help arrives
- Review medications with a pharmacist regarding their effects on light sensitivity and body temperature regulation
- Have a cell phone available and remain in areas of good signal unless other arrangements have been made for emergencies

Experiencing the great outdoors is an essential part of life. With proper precautions, preparation and safety awareness, the risks of outdoor activities can be minimized so enjoyment can be had by all!

**The lists of medications included here are not all-inclusive. Check with a pharmacist or nurse as well as drug information fact sheets for each medication for any sensitivities or warnings*