



Healthy Habits

Tips and resources for living well



HealthAdvocate™

member
newsletter

Be prepared! Essential inventory for your first aid kit

Summertime often means more time outside at the park, beach, lake, pool, or even just your own backyard. While being outdoors is fun, it also brings potential risks for injuries, including cuts and scrapes, sunburn and bug bites, among others. However, being prepared with a proper first aid kit to treat these minor, yet common, issues can help you relax and better enjoy being outdoors. Whether you buy a first aid kit or decide to make your own, here are a few essentials items you should make sure are included.

Summertime-specific essentials:

- Sunscreen, to guard against sunburn
- Lip balm with sunscreen/SPF
- Aloe, which is great for soothing sunburns
- An anti-itch lotion such as Calamine in case you encounter poison ivy
- Antihistamines to combat summer allergies
- Eye drops, to help with dry or itchy eyes brought on by allergies
- A small magnifying glass that can help identify a tick on your skin
- Insect repellent, to keep away mosquitoes and other pests

You should also consider keeping the following information in your kit or having it somewhere easily accessible in your car, house or saved on your cell phone:

- Contact information for all your doctors, including pediatricians, allergists, dentists, and other specialists. Also include phone numbers for your local emergency service providers and a phone number to reach Poison Control.
- A written list of all prescription medications you and your family members currently take; also note on this list which medications, if any, you or your family members are allergic to.
- Any prescribed or over-the-counter medications your family regularly takes, including epinephrine, antacids, pain relievers, etc.

Don't forget to check the expiration dates on any medications, creams, and other treatments that are already in your kit. If you find expired items, dispose of them safely and replace them with items that have not expired.



Protect your skin while enjoying the outdoors

While it's great to soak up the sunshine and fresh air, it is also important to take steps to protect your skin while doing so. Certain insects and pests, plants like poison ivy and the sun's strong rays can all wreak havoc on your skin if you don't take precautions. Read on for tips to protect yourself from these common yet frustrating causes of skin woes.

Protect your skin from the sun

Sunburn is not only painful, but each time you get sunburned, it can multiply your risk of developing skin cancer later on. Luckily, preventing sunburn is as simple as planning ahead and taking a few simple steps to limit your exposure to the sun's damaging UV rays:

- Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or greater at least 30 minutes before sun exposure.
- Even if you don't have specific plans to be outdoors, it's still important to apply a lotion or sunscreen with SPF to your face and body.
- Wear sunglasses with total UV protection.
- Wear wide-brimmed hats.
- Avoid direct sun exposure as much as possible during peak UV radiation hours.

Protect your skin from irritating plants

Many of us have heard the saying, "leaves of three, let them be." This is in reference to poison ivy, one of three common plants that can cause an incredibly itchy rash when your skin comes in contact with the plant, specifically the oil on its leaves, stems and roots. Not everyone is allergic to these plants; however, if you are, you will notice the rash forming within a day or so of exposure.

Poison ivy, and its cousins poison oak and poison sumac, are typically found in wooded areas; however, they can also pop up in gardens, at the edge of your yard, and in other spots with brush and weeds. The best way to prevent a reaction is to avoid the plant by knowing what it looks like and staying clear. Also keep in mind that you can develop the rash if you touch an object or pet that has the oil on them – so make sure to clean anything (or anyone!) that may have come in contact.

Other tips to protect yourself from these plants include:

- Wear protective clothing like long pants and sleeves if you're planning to hike in the woods, do yard work or landscaping, or camp.
- If you may have been exposed, immediately wash your skin and all clothing worn to try and remove the oil before it can cause a reaction. Same goes for any pets that may have come in contact with the plants and their oils.
- Remove the plants if you find them in your yard, but make sure to wear heavy gloves and other protective gear when doing so. And do not burn the plants, as the oil can be carried by smoke and affect those breathing it in.
- Consider trying an over-the-counter product intended to protect your skin from the oils on these plants.

Protect your skin from bug bites, stings and more

Mosquitos and ticks, among other insects, can cause a nasty bite, but more importantly, they can possibly carry and pass on diseases including Zika, West Nile and Lyme (depending on where you live). By being vigilant and taking steps to prevent bites, you can protect yourself and your family.

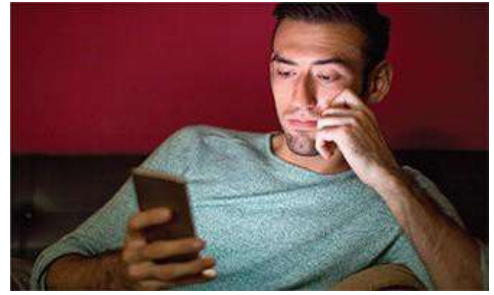
- When working or spending time outdoors (especially during the hours when mosquitoes are typically biting), try wearing long sleeves, pants and socks to reduce your risk of being bitten.
- When indoors, use air conditioning and/or window and door screens to prevent mosquitoes and other insects from coming inside.
- Use bug spray on any exposed skin and on your clothing to make yourself less attractive to insects. The EPA and CDC recommend repellents that list any of the following as active ingredients – DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or plant-based oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Use citronella candles to help repel mosquitoes and other bugs.
- Check yourself! After spending time outdoors, thoroughly check over your entire body for ticks. Removing ticks carefully with a tweezer within a few hours can ensure they haven't had a chance to pass on any bacteria that causes disease.

For more information, check out the CDC's guide on preventing bug bites.

Summer is and should be a fantastic season for outdoor fun of all kinds. By taking precautions to protect your and your family's skin from common issues, you can help ensure you enjoy this summer to its fullest.

It's time for a digital detox!

Do you feel like you're missing out on something when you're not online? Are your friends or family complaining about your time spent texting, emailing, gaming, or browsing Facebook or the web? Are you depressed, restless, moody or nervous when you're offline and okay again when you're online? If so, you may have a "digital addiction" which can affect your brain, as well as your mental, emotional and physical health.



Continually checking your email, texting, surfing the web or playing online games can be as destructive as other types of addictions like substance abuse or gambling. The brain can become conditioned to the need for the instant gratification that technology offers. After a while, this could turn into a physical need. A digital preoccupation can become unhealthy if it starts affecting your real-life relationships.

Could you have a digital dependency?

If you're compulsively viewing your screen in the presence of others, or substituting social media interactions for real-life interactions, you can miss out on meaningful conversations and the deep closeness with others that supports positive mental health. Here's what you should know.

You may have a digital dependency if you...

- Feel that something is missing when you can't go online
- Hear complaints from friends and family about your time spent online
- Spend more time online than you intended
- Your online use interferes with your job, social activities or responsibilities
- Frequently choose to spend time online over going out with other people
- Hide, lie or become defensive about online activities
- Feel a heightened sense of euphoria while online
- Feel depressed, restless, moody or nervous offline and okay again when you're online

What can you do?

These tips can help you curb your digital technology use so it enhances your life rather than detracts from it.

- Silence your cell phone or leave it behind when attending events or during outings or activities
- Unplug completely for a set amount of time each day
- Make screen time off limits when you are with friends and family
- Make meals technology-free as a chance to reconnect with others at the table
- Don't take your phone to bed or use it as an alarm clock
- Turn off your cell phone at work
- Avoid responding immediately to every text
- Each week, have an entire technology-free day and engage in an enjoyable activity