

## Great Exercise- Go Hiking and Stay Safe!

Your safety depends on your own good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant attention. Backcountry hikers should be in good physical condition and be able to survive on their own. Proper equipment and the knowledge of how to use it are essential for a safe trip. Your safety is your responsibility.

Here are a few basics to help you get started:

- Let a responsible person know your route and return time. Have them contact the park if you do not return within a reasonable time.
- Always hike with another person. Keep your hiking party together and stay on officially maintained trails. Always keep children in your sight when hiking—do not allow them to get ahead of you or fall behind.
- Carry a current park map trail and know how to read it.
- Carry 2 small flashlights or headlamps—even on a day hike. If you have trouble on the trail, darkness may fall before you can finish your hike.
- Take adequate water—minimum 2 quarts per person per day. All water obtained from the backcountry should be treated either by filtering or boiling.
- Carry a small first aid kit.
- Check the current weather forecast and be prepared for quickly changing conditions.
- Wear shoes or boots that provide good ankle support.
- Avoid hypothermia (the dangerous lowering of body temperature) by keeping dry. Avoid cotton clothing. Dress in layers that can be easily removed or added as you heat up or cool down. Always carry a wind-resistant jacket and rain gear—even on sunny days!
- Don't attempt to cross rain-swollen streams; they will recede rapidly after precipitation stops and the wait may save your life! When crossing any stream more than ankle-deep: unbuckle the waist strap of your pack, wear shoes, and use a staff to steady yourself.

### **Treat All Drinking Water**

The protozoan *Giardia lamblia* may be present in park waters. When ingested, their reproductive cysts may cause an intestinal disorder that appears weeks after your trip. The easiest method of effective water treatment is to boil water for one minute or use a filter capable of removing particles as small as 1 micron.

### **Hypothermia Kills—Even in Summer!**

Be prepared for sudden weather changes. Cool, wet, and windy conditions can cause hypothermia. Hypothermia is a progressive lowering of the body's core temperature causing physical collapse and diminished mental capacity. A wet hiker can succumb to hypothermia in summer at higher elevations! Prevent hypothermia by using rain gear before you become wet.

Minimize wind exposure and if your clothes become wet, replace them with dry ones. Avoid sweating in cold weather by dressing in layers, rather than a single bulky garment. On warm days watch for signs of heat exhaustion.

Stay well-hydrated in all conditions—three to four quarts of water per day is required to avoid dehydration.

### **Encounters With Bears**

Bears in the park are wild and their behavior is unpredictable. Although extremely rare, attacks on humans have occurred, inflicting serious injuries and death. If you see a bear remain watchful. Do not approach it. If your presence causes the bear to change its behavior (stops feeding, changes its travel direction, watches you, etc.)—you're too close. Being too close may promote aggressive behavior from the bear such as running toward you, making loud noises, or swatting the ground. The bear is demanding more space. Don't run, but slowly back away, watching the bear. Try to increase the distance between you and the bear. The bear will probably do the same.

If a bear persistently follows or approaches you, without vocalizing, or paw swatting, try changing your direction. If the bear continues to follow you, stand your ground. If the bear gets closer, talk loudly or shout at it. Act aggressively and try to intimidate the bear. Act together as a group if you have companions. Make yourselves look as large as possible (for example, move to higher ground). Throw non-food objects such as rocks at the bear. Use a deterrent such as a stout stick. Don't run and don't turn away from the bear. Don't leave food for the bear; this encourages further problems.

Most injuries from black bear attacks are minor and result from a bear attempting to get at people's food. If the bear's behavior indicates that it is after your food and you're physically attacked, separate yourself from the food and slowly back away.

### **Insects**

Yellowjacket wasps are the insects of greatest concern. They build nests in the ground along trails and streams and are aggressive when disturbed. Avoid perfume, powder, and scented deodorants which may attract yellowjackets. Stings cause local swelling and can lead to severe allergic reactions in a few sensitive individuals. Such persons should carry epinephrine kits.

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