

Hiking Safety

A day hike in a forest or along a mountain trail is a good provider of exercise and refreshment. It also allows you to keep an eye on animal tracks and plant life. Proper preparation is essential for hiking and can make the difference between a satisfying success and a disabling disaster. Stay safe and healthy by following these guidelines.

Before You Leave

- Plan your route. Keep in mind the physical fitness levels and ages of the people who will be with you. Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. Check the weather report and plan appropriately; if rain is predicted, take rain gear.
- Make sure members of your group have first aid knowledge and skills that they're capable of using in an emergency. Be aware of any medical conditions other people have so they can be treated appropriately in case an emergency arises.

Prepare a first aid kit that has these items:

- Topical Antiseptic Towelettes
- Antibiotic Ointment
- Bandage Strips (Band-Aids)
- Sterile Gauze Pads

- Adhesive Tape
- Ace Bandages
- Moleskin Tape Squares to Prevent and Treat Blisters
- Safety Pins to Hold Compresses or Splints in Place or to Make an Arm Sling from a Shirt Sleeve
- Tweezers to Remove Splinters and Ticks
- Small Scissors
- Chemical Ice Pack
- Sunscreen
- Chapstick
- Insect Repellent
- Pain and Anti-Inflammatory Medication
- Decongestant
- Backpack Medical Guide

Take along at least two quarts of water per person. It may be useful to carry water-purification tablets to use in case you run out of prepared water. Pack high-energy snack food (fresh fruit, dried fruit, high protein candy bars, nuts and seeds) in addition to food you intend to eat for meals.

Continued on next page

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What to Wear

Wear the proper clothes. Layering is important in order for your body to quickly adapt to changing temperatures, both internal and external, and the right pair of shoes is fundamental because foot pain can put a damper on your entire hike. The following items are considered vital for a successful outing:

- **Boots/Shoes:** of solid construction, they should fit comfortably snug with enough room for toes and with little or no slippage in the heel. They should be weather proofed and broken in.
- **Socks:** either wear specially made hiking socks or a set of one pair of wool socks over a lightweight nylon pair. Take along extra socks in case you need a dry pair.
- **Pants:** wear pants constructed to be loose, warm, comfortable and quick drying. Pants that are easily converted into shorts are good for warmer weather.
- **Shirt:** light synthetic fiber, such as polypropylene, bunting or nylon pile is recommended because it is quick drying and moisture-wicking. It also has good insulation quality.

- **Jacket:** a jacket that is both wind proof and water proof, has a hood and is sized large enough to cover more insulating clothes worn under it is suitable.
- **Head Covering:** a hat or hood should be styled to retain body heat or provide shade as changing weather dictates.
- **Rain Gear:** take a lightweight poncho, or rain pants and a hooded parka.

Ten Essentials

Skilled hikers have dubbed these items the “ten essentials” to take on any hike:

- Map
- Compass
- Flashlight/Headlamp
- Extra Food
- Extra Clothing
- Sunglasses
- First Aid Supplies
- Pocket Knife
- Matches
- Fire Starter



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