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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Be prepared for fun: tips for safe, healthy camping

Many family memories are created in the great outdoors. The time away from work, TV and computer screens offers a chance to recharge and reconnect. To ensure your family has a healthy, safe camping adventure, consider the following.



Activities

Planning to explore the campground or park via bike, boat or on foot? Helmets are a must (adults, too) when riding bikes, advises the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Pack sturdy shoes for hikes and insist all boaters wear life jackets.

Before exploring remote areas, check the weather forecast, use a hiking map and wear comfortable, water-resistant clothing. Finally, don't forget to wear sunscreen.

Creepy crawlies

Prevent bug bites by applying repellent with DEET (up to a 30% concentration) or picaridin, according to the AAP. Wear hats, long sleeves and pants in the woods. Regularly inspect everyone for ticks. If you find a tick, remove it with tweezers by grabbing as close to the tick's head as possible. Remove other insects' stingers by scraping the skin with the edge of a credit card. An ice pack can help with swelling.

Snake bites should be treated in an emergency department if the type of snake is not known. Do not ice the bite and keep the area that has been bitten below the heart, the AAP advises. It is important to be able to describe the snake.

Food safety

Avoid food poisoning by cooking food well and storing in a cooler with ice. While preparing food, wash hands and surfaces well. Camping experts advise cooking and storing food at least 100 feet away from your sleeping area to avoid attracting animals.

Know your plants

Touching poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac plants can cause blisters, a rash, itchiness and other allergic reactions (see plant pictures at <http://1.usa.gov/1kqYQZJ>). The blisters and rash are not contagious, but the plant oil, which causes reactions, can spread easily. Wash the area with soap and water and apply an ice pack.

Remind children not to eat plants growing in the wild. Most mushrooms and some berries are poisonous.

First aid kit

Organize supplies into a first aid kit. Key items include bandages, medical tape, gauze, tweezers, ice pack, antiseptic liquid/ointment, calamine lotion, allergy medicine, children's ibuprofen and prescription medications.

Finally, make sure your family is up to date on vaccinations and add your pediatrician's phone number to your cell phone book.

— Trisha Koriath

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