

Hiking and Outdoor Safety

Hiking is great exercise and can be fun for the entire family, However, when hiking with children, be prepared for and expect the unexpected. When planning for a hiking expedition, safety should be your number one concern.

Keep in mind the following safety tips:

1. Never allow children to hike alone.
2. Have a plan and stick with it. Map out your hiking trail ahead of time. Before your hike, make sure that someone knows your itinerary. This person could be a park ranger, or a friend or relative that you can check in with upon your return.
3. Take a compass with you and make sure that you know how to use it.
4. Set realistic distances to hike. Children should be physically capable in terms of pace, difficulty and distances.
5. Teach your children to stay on the trail and to stay together with the group. Purchase whistles for children and give one to each child. Instruct them to only use their whistle if they get separated from the group.
6. Take along high-energy snacks and drinking water. Children can dehydrate and become overheated very quickly.
7. Wear proper clothing such as hiking boots and light colored long sleeve shirts and pants that can protect your skin from scrapes, bites , poisonous plants and the sun.
8. Consider sun safety. Apply sunscreen with at least an SPF15 fifteen to thirty minutes before going out in the sun. Reapply throughout the day, even when it is overcast.
9. Review common poisonous plants such as poison oak, sumac and poison ivy. Make sure that everyone in your group can identify these plants. Teach your children to avoid touching unknown plants.
10. Take a first aid supply kit with you on your hike. Items to include are : adhesive and elastic bandages, gauze pads, blister dressings, thermometer, latex gloves, large plastic bag, tweezers and needles, antibiotic cream, oral antihistamine (Benadryl), medications for pain and fever (acetaminophen or ibuprofen), hydrocortisone cream , alcohol pads and liquid antiseptic soap.
11. Use citronella based products to repel insects and put it on clothing instead of skin whenever possible. Check your kids at the end of the day for ticks. Be sure to check in places that ticks like to hide like behind the ear and under the arms.
12. Teach your children that they should never approach wild animals, even small ones. Wild animals are unpredictable and will attack if they feel threatened.
13. If you have a cell phone, take it along but make sure that it is charged. Be aware that you might not get reception in certain areas.

