

Water recreation safety tips

Fun in the sun often involves playing in the water. Whether you're soaking up some rays in a backyard pool, catching some ocean waves on a surfboard or sliding your way across a Slip 'N Slide, there's no shortage of ways to incorporate water into warm weather recreation.

Water-based recreation makes especially warm days more comfortable, but caution must reign supreme when engaging in water play. The National Drowning Prevention Alliance offers the following safety tips to lower the risk of water recreation accidents.

- Brush up on your swimming skills. The NDPA reports that learning how to swim can reduce drowning risk by 88 percent. Adults and children alike are urged to go over the basics of swimming before getting in the water to ensure their skills are up to the task. If possible, practice the basics in the shallow end of a pool to reacclimate your body to

swimming. Parents can keep a watchful eye on their young swimmers to ensure they haven't forgotten how to swim since last season.

- Never swim alone. Swimming with a partner is a fun way to stay safe. The buddy system ensures someone is there to look after swimmers and offer help if a swimmer is struggling. A buddy also can call for help by alerting a lifeguard when swimming in a public place such as a beach, lake or community swimming pool.
- Stick to designated swimming areas. The flag system is often employed at parks, beaches and lakes to indicate when and where it's safe to swim. A red flag typically symbolizes swimming is unsafe, whereas a green flag means conditions are welcoming for swimmers. Stick to areas designated as safe. The NDPA notes it's always preferable to swim under the supervision of a lifeguard.
- Err on the side of caution. The NDPA notes it's best to get out when in doubt. If

water conditions don't feel right, exit the water. Falling rain, rough currents, muscle cramps, and/or physical fatigue can quickly transform a fun swimming session into a dangerous situation. Get out of the water at the first sign of doubt. You can always return later if your physical condition and/or the conditions in the water change.

- Be an educated swimmer. Savvy swimmers know to check the local forecast, including water conditions, before getting their toes wet. The NDPA notes it's unsafe to swim in the rain, particularly if there is thunder and lightning. That's true whether you're swimming in an ocean, a lake or a backyard pool. A wetsuit can help keep the body warm when water temperatures are low, but the NDPA notes such swimming sessions should be brief. In addition, the NDPA notes that swimming in a wetsuit when water temperatures are between 75 and 80 degrees could lead to heat exhaustion.



Summer time means playing in the water. Water-based recreation makes especially warm days more comfortable, but caution must reign supreme when engaging in water play.

- Don't swim after consuming alcohol. Swimming and alcohol are a bad mix, as the NDPA notes that alcohol impairs balance and coordination, each of which are vital for swimming. Alcohol also increases the likelihood of risky behavior, which can be hazardous when in the water.

Water-based recreation helps make warm weather seasons even more fun. But safety must be the utmost priority when having fun in the water. Additional water safety strategies can be found at ndpa.org.

Submitted by Metro Editorial Service.

Safety guidelines for the great outdoors

People venture into the great outdoors for many different reasons. The Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act was developed in part to analyze the outdoor recreation economy of the United States. In 2018, its report showed outdoor recreation contributed more than \$412 billion to the U.S. economy and 4.5 million jobs. In 2019-2020, Parks Canada reported 24.8 million people visited parks and historic sites.

The outdoors became even more popular during the COVID-19 pandemic. Outdoor areas were safer places to gather and made it easier to gather without compromising social distancing guidelines. Since then, nature has continued to provide the space and respite people need.

As people continue to venture outdoors, it is important to do so safely. Yale Medicine says serious medical conditions and severe injuries can occur in the wilderness. Preparation is key to avoid such scenarios.

Check the weather

Know what the weather will be when spending time in the great outdoors. Hikers or those engaged in other activities should have a way to protect themselves from rain and lightning strikes or being caught in cold weather for a long time. Appropriate clothing and a tarp or another temporary shelter can

be crucial.

Take a first aid kit along

The first aid kit should be stocked with the basics for routine medical issues like cuts, burns or insect bites. For serious outdoors people, a lightweight splint can immobilize a sprain or broken bone. Outfit the kit depending on the activity. Consult with a medical professional or park ranger about what to bring.

Leave a plan with someone

Much in the way a pilot files a flight plan, people spending time outdoors should create their own travel plans and leave the details with someone at home. The plan should list who is going, where everyone will be and the expected time away. This way if the group is not heard from in a set period of time, the person at home will know where to begin the search.

Respect plants and animals

Injuries can occur from encounters with flora and fauna. Do not handle or consume wild plants without knowing that they are safe. Do not approach or feed wild animals. Store food up and away from tents so that bears and other animals will not be lured to your campsite.

Practice fire safety

The conservation organization Wild Virginia urges outdoor lovers to follow fire safety guidelines. Do not create a fire beneath overhang-

ing branches or anywhere other items may catch fire. Use a ring of sand or stones to contain the campfire. Never light a fire if the fire danger rating is high. Parks usually post wildfire risk charts that will indicate if fires are off limits. Always fully extinguish a fire before leaving the area, and check that the ashes are no longer smoldering.

Know limits

Each individual should


know his or her medical history and physical limitations and keep them in mind when planning days outdoors.

Spending time outdoors presents plenty of opportunities for enjoyment, especially when people take safety measures into consideration.

Submitted by Metro Editorial Service.



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