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MCDOWELL COUNTY WELLNESS and WELLBEING NEWSLETTER

Fun in the Sun

WHY OUTSIDE?

Exercising in nature has been proven to improve one's mental and physical health. Being outside also helps to promote higher vitamin D levels, a vitamin the body makes when skin is directly exposed to the sun. Many people are deficient in vitamin D, so exercising outside can be a great way to correct that.

In addition, outdoor activity can help you maintain a healthy weight, boost immunity and lower stress. Exercising outside can feel less routine than working out in a gym. An easy way to make exercise fun for the whole family is by playing outside. Being active outdoors is a great way for you to reconnect with nature and stay healthy.

Physical activity, or exercise, is one of the best things you can do for your mental and physical health. Only 1 in 3 adults complete the recommended physical activity each week (CDC, 2021). Active people are generally at less risk for diseases, and have stronger immune systems. Adults should aim to get 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week, or 30 minutes - 5 days per week.



Where to Go

- There are many different places you can go to be active outside. You can exercise in your backyard or visit a local, state or national park.
- <https://www.ncparks.gov>
- <https://www.blueridgetraveler.com>

What to Do

It's easy to find affordable activities that you can enjoy outdoors. Some of these activities include:

- Walking or hiking—Go for a walk around the block after work or after dinner to get your heart pumping. Hiking and walking have been proven to improve heart health and can help you maintain a healthy waistline.
- Riding a bike helps improve balance and endurance. Biking is a fun, family-friendly activity that everyone can enjoy. Consider biking to work or school to sneak in some extra exercise during the week.
- Go swimming—This low-impact activity burns more calories per hour than almost any other activity, and has been shown to improve strength, flexibility and cardiovascular health.

What to Bring

If you're spending more than an hour or two outside, make sure you bring these items with you:

- Water so that you can stay hydrated, especially if it is warm outside
- Healthy snacks like nuts and carrot sticks
- Sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses to protect yourself from the sun's rays

Health Benefits of Nature
(1 min. video)



Tips for an Enjoyable, Safe Summer

Exercise- Ready to move your exercise routine outdoors? As the temperature climbs so does your risk of heat-related illnesses. Stay safe while exercising outside.

- Avoid exercising in the hottest part of the day
- Apply broad-spectrum, water resistant sunscreen that has at least 30 spf
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water every day, not just the day you plan to exercise
- Wear sunglasses and a hat to reduce your exposure to the sun
- Be aware of the symptoms of heat-related illness and take precautions if you feel faint, dizzy, or nauseated; are sweating heavily; or experiencing rapid or faint heartbeat

Pool Safety- Though splashing and diving is good summertime fun, owning a pool is a serious responsibility. There are many precautions you can take to ensure family and friends enjoy your pool safely

- Don't swim for 30 minutes after hearing thunder or seeing lightning
- Install a fence with a self-locking and self-closing gate to isolate your pool from the rest of the house
- Don't leave children unattended
- Teach all guests your pool rules and post them in a highly visible location

Grilling- As warmer weather hits, so does the smell of the grill in the air. According to the National Fire Protection Association nearly 9,000 home fires involve grills each year.

- Never leave your grill unattended, fires can double in size every minute
- Grill outside only, never in an enclosed space like a porch or garage even if it is well ventilated
- Keep pets and small children at least three feet away from grill
- Clean grill regularly by removing fat and grease buildup
- Choose a safe location on a flat surface well away from your house, garage or other structures
- Check all hoses on gas grills before using it for the first time each year



VISION CARE: UV PROTECTION

The sun releases energy, called radiation, in various forms: in the sunlight you see, the heat you feel and the invisible ultraviolet (UV) rays that cause you to get sunburned. UV rays from the sun can also damage your eyes and hurt your vision.

Dangers of UV Rays

There are two types of UV radiation: UVA rays and UVB rays. UVB rays are more likely to cause sunburn, but UVA rays penetrate deeper. Exposure to either can damage your eyes. Long-term exposure to UV rays can result in eye problems that may lead to vision loss from conditions like cataracts or macular degeneration. Other dangers include skin cancer (around the eyelids) and corneal sunburn. Long hours at the beach or ski slope without proper eye protection can cause corneal sunburn, which can be very painful and may cause temporary vision loss.

Exposure Risk Factors Everyone is at risk for eye damage from UV radiation.

The risk of sun-related eye problems, however, is higher for people who:

- Spend long hours in the sun
- Have had cataract surgery or have certain retina disorders
- Are on certain medications, such as tetracycline, sulfa drugs, birth control pills, diuretics and tranquilizers that increase the eye's sensitivity to light.



Proper Eye Protection

Adequately protecting your eyes from the sun, and other elements like wind or water, is crucial to maintaining your vision and eye health.

- Use everyday eyewear that absorbs UV rays. All types of eyewear, including prescription and nonprescription glasses, contact lenses and lens implants, should absorb UVA and UVB rays. For UV protection in everyday eyewear, there are several options like UV-blocking lens materials, coatings and photochromic lenses.

- Select the right sunglasses. Sunglasses help in two important ways: they filter light, and they protect the eyes from damaging UV rays. Look for labels that state they block 99-100% of UVA and UVB rays. They should also reduce glare, protect your entire eye area, be comfortable to wear and don't distort color.

- Wear a brimmed hat or cap. A wide-brimmed hat or cap will block about half of UV rays, and also limit UV rays that hit the eyes from above or around glasses



Camping Safety

Camping is an activity enjoyed by millions of Americans each year. To keep the experience fun and safe there are some basic precautions that every camper should take.

Essentials

Before setting out it is important that you have the following items:

- A medical kit—It should include a topical antibiotic, bandages, cotton swabs, diarrhea medication, antacids, scissors, tweezers and burn ointment, at a minimum.
- Flashlights—Bring several, and ensure beforehand that they are working correctly. Carry along some extra batteries as well. You may wish to purchase an LED flashlight; although more expensive, they last much longer.
- Water—It is never a good idea to drink from natural water sources such as lakes or streams. Bring along bottled water, water purification tablets or a water purifier. If you decide to bring bottled water, figure a gallon per person per day to cover drinking and cooking.
- Sunscreen and sunglasses—Being out in the sun for hours at a time—much less days—can cause irreversible skin and eye damage not to mention the immediate discomfort sunburn will bring to your trip.
- Waterproof matches—Even if everything else is wet, you can still make a fire.
- Insect repellent—Not only is sun burn unpleasant, but bug bites can be nasty too.
- Extra clothing—As hot as it may be during the day, nighttime may be an entirely different story. In addition, should your clothing get wet, you will want dry items to change into.

Tent Placement

It is important to consider the weather while choosing a site to set up camp. Avoid low-lying areas that could flood during a heavy rain. Also, in windy situation avoid setting up your tent under a tree, as possible falling limbs could present a danger.

Animals

- Never approach or feed a wild animal. While it may look safe, their actions can be unpredictable.
- If camping in bear country, ensure that all dishes and food are kept at least 200 yards away from where you plan to sleep. Hang cooking utensils and food from a tree while not in use.



Avoiding Dehydration

Dehydration may seem like a minor ailment, but it can be quite dangerous. In fact, millions of people worldwide—many of them infants and older adults—die of dehydration each year.

Get the Facts

In the simplest terms, dehydration occurs when you lose more water than you take in and your body does not have enough water to carry out its normal functions. What's more, even mild dehydration—as little as a 1% to 2% loss of body weight—can cause symptoms such as weakness, dizziness and fatigue, and may have a negative effect on long-term health.

Water Loss

On average, adults lose about 2.5 liters (more than 10 cups) of water a day, simply by doing everyday tasks such as sweating, breathing and going to the bathroom. Also lost are electrolytes—minerals such as sodium, potassium and calcium—that maintain the balance of fluids in your body. This is before you may even think about mowing the lawn on a humid afternoon, working out at the gym or rearranging the living room furniture—all of which cause much higher water loss.

Symptoms

Mild to moderate dehydration is likely to cause the following symptoms:

- Excessive thirst
- Sleepiness
- Dry mouth
- Few or no tears when crying
- Muscle weakness
- Dry mouth
- Few or no tears when crying
- Muscle weakness
- Headache
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

Prevent Dehydration

Preventing dehydration sounds easy enough: consume plenty of fluids and foods high in water content, like fruits and vegetables. However, how much fluid do we really need? Determining your appropriate water intake is not an exact science, as much depends on age, physical condition, activity level, environment and individual physiology. The best recommendation is to simply make a conscious effort to stay hydrated. In addition, make water your beverage of choice! Try drinking water with every meal and between meals. Take water breaks instead of coffee or tea breaks, and substitute sparkling water for alcohol.



Allergy Relief Through the Seasons

Campfire Safety

CDC Guidance on Water Treatment Options When
Hiking, Camping or Traveling

Avoiding Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke

Basal Cell Carcinoma Signs

Skin Cancer Facts and Statistics

This content of this newsletter is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. For further information, please consult a medical professional.