



Summer is a high point for most Missouri families. Incorporating a few health tips can make your family cookouts and outdoor adventures more enjoyable and rewarding.

Water safety

Many of Missouri's rivers are flowing at high levels. Plan your boating and swimming trips carefully to avoid fast-moving and dangerous waters. Other measures you should take include:

- Supervise young children around water.
- Wear an appropriate personal flotation device (PFD) when boating or tubing. Children should wear a PFD on beaches, docks, and riverbanks.
- Be aware that in as little as 10 minutes cold water can cause a person's internal temperature to drop to unsafe levels - a condition known as hypothermia. This can result in serious, permanent injury or even death.
- Avoid boating or swimming when consuming alcohol – drinking alcohol can accelerate the effects of hypothermia.
- When [swimming](#) in pools, remember that some parasites can survive proper chlorination. To protect yourself and others, do not get pool or recreational water in your mouth. If you do, don't swallow it.
- Shower before entering a pool and be sure to wash your children's buttocks before letting them enter the pool. Adults and children should not swim if ill with diarrhea. Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Take children on regular bathroom breaks, and change diapers in the bathroom, not poolside.

Mosquito- and tick-bite prevention

The bites of mosquitoes and ticks can spread viruses and bacteria and cause disease. Protect yourself and your family:

- To avoid mosquito bites, [apply insect repellents](#) with EPA-approved ingredients such as DEET or picaridin. Apply to exposed skin and clothing, following instructions on the product label.
- To avoid tick bites, apply insect repellents with 20-50 percent DEET to exposed skin and clothing.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that repellents containing up to 30 percent DEET can be used on children over 2 months of age.
- Reapply repellents as needed according to label instructions.
- Check frequently for ticks on clothing, body, hair, and pets after returning from outdoors, even your own

backyard.

- If a tick bites you, use **fine-tipped** tweezers to grab its head as close to the skin as possible. Pull upward with a steady, even pressure until removed. Wash your hands with soap and water and apply an antiseptic to the bite site. Do not squeeze, crush, or puncture the body of the tick.

Food safety

Eating and **cooking outdoors** in the summer heat make the basics of food safety especially important. To avoid unpleasant episodes of “food poisoning” or food-borne illness remember to:

- Wash your hands regularly with a rich lather of soap, especially when working with raw meats such as hamburger or chicken. If you are camping and do not have access to running water, use hand sanitizer.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Make sure that you have enough ice to maintain cold foods at or below 41°F. Put leftovers on ice as soon as possible. Any foods that have been ‘left out’ for four hours or more should not be eaten.
- Cook foods thoroughly to 165°F. Use a long stem meat thermometer to check the cooking temperatures of meats. Most meat thermometers come with specific temperature guidelines for safe cooking. The color of the meat is not always a reliable indicator of whether or not the meat is fully cooked.
- Keep raw meats separate from other foods like salads or fruits; and don’t use a plate that previously held raw meat unless it has been first washed in hot, soapy water.
- Don’t drink out of streams or lakes unless water is filtered or treated first.

Sun safety

Sunburns are more than painful; they can lead to skin cancer. Remember to:

- **Cover up!** Cover as much skin as possible with tightly-woven clothing and a hat with a 2–3 inch brim or a shade cap.
- Use a sunscreen that protects against both UV-A and UV-B sunlight spectrums with an SPF of 15 or higher. Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside. Don’t forget sunscreen lip balm.
- Reapply sunscreen regularly. No sunscreen, regardless of strength, should be expected to stay effective longer than two hours without reapplication. Apply more frequently if you are in the water.
- Wear sunglasses that block UV rays and protect your eyes.

Heat safety

Each year Missourians suffer from **heat-related illnesses** and death. During prolonged periods of high temperatures remember to:

- Increase your fluid intake—regardless of your activity level. Don’t wait until you feel thirsty to drink fluids. Be sure that infants and children drink adequate amounts of liquids.
- Avoid drinks containing caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar and avoid very cold drinks because they will actually cause you to lose more fluid.
- Be aware of the warning signs of heat-related illness, such as light-headedness, mild nausea or confusion, sleepiness or profuse sweating.
- Take frequent breaks from the outdoors in an air-conditioned environment to allow your body to cool off. If air conditioning isn’t available, find a shady place to rest. Electric fans may be useful to increase comfort and to draw cool air into your home at night if the temperature is not in the upper 90s. In excessive heat conditions, a cool shower or bath is a more effective way to cool off.

Most importantly, be prepared. Missouri’s exciting rivers and state parks offer endless outdoor opportunities, but accidents or unexpected events can occur at any time. Carry a first-aid kit and enough food and water for an emergency. Always let friends or relatives know your travel plans. With a little bit of planning and by taking precautions, your outdoor experiences can be treasured for a lifetime.