

**W**arm, sunny weather usually means more family time, fresh fruits and vegetables and outdoor activities. While outdoor activities such as hiking, swimming or gardening are fun, they can also be the source of some common health problems like sunburn or poison oak. You can help prevent some of these problems by following the tips on this handout.

You can often treat common skin problems at home with information from this handout or from your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*. While many problems can be treated at home, some problems may be more severe and may require medical attention. If you feel that your health problem is not improving or is getting worse, please call your doctor or nurse practitioner right away.



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Regional Health Education, Northern California

# Outdoor Health Tips

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## To help protect you and your child

### Sunburns

Being out in the sun for a long time is not good for anyone's skin, especially infants and children. Infants and children can easily burn because their skin is very tender. Teach your children good sun habits that will last a lifetime.

- A good way to avoid sunburns is to wear long-sleeved shirts, pants and a hat when in the sun.
- Wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Be sure to apply a good amount of sunscreen to you and your child. Most sunscreens need to be reapplied every 3 to 4 hours as well as immediately after swimming or heavy exercise (sweating).
- A "waterproof" sunscreen usually stays on for about 30 minutes in water. Sunscreen will stay on longer if it is applied 30 to 60 minutes before getting into the water. This will give it time to dry.
- Try to stay out of the sun from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., when the sun is strongest.
- The sun can damage your eyes, too. Always wear sunglasses with ultraviolet (UV) protection when you are outside.

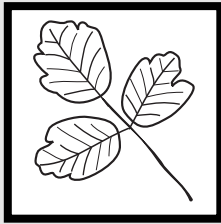


### Insect Bites (Mosquitoes and Bees)

Insect bites can often cause redness, swelling and itching. In some people, especially children, the redness and swelling may be worse. Unless you or your child is allergic, these bites will go away on their own in a few days. Wearing clothing that covers the skin and using insect repellent are two of the best ways to avoid insect bites.

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing and shoes, as well as to any exposed skin areas. For children, insect repellent should not contain more than 10% DEET. **Do not put repellent on the hands of small children, because they often put their hands in their mouths.** If repellent is put on the skin, wash it off at the end of the day.
- Insect repellent brands such as *Off!* or *Cutter\** are good for children and work for 6 to 12 hours.
- For mosquito bites ice or a cold pack may help with itching.
- For bee stings, make sure the stinger is removed and then apply ice or a cold pack.





## Poison Oak

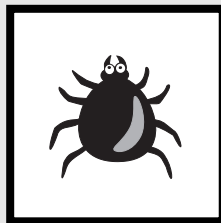
The best way not to get a rash from poison oak is to avoid the plant altogether. Learn what the plant looks like and watch for it when walking outdoors. Poison oak leaves usually grow in clusters of three. They can be green or red in the spring and summer and orange or brown in the fall.

- If you come into contact with poison oak, wash the area of skin with cool water within 10 minutes to get the plant oil off the skin.
- Wash anything that may have come into contact with the plant including your clothes, shoes, shoelaces and even your dog.
- If applied early, a steroid cream like Cortaid\* can reduce the itching. Put the cream on the area with the rash 3 to 4 times a day for 10 to 14 days.
- The sores should be dried up and no longer itchy in about 2 weeks. In the meantime, cut your child's fingernails short and encourage him or her not to scratch.

## Tick Bites

A tick is a tiny insect that attaches itself to the body. Ticks are often hard to remove, so it's best not to let them get on your skin at all. Tick bites have been associated with Lyme disease, but Lyme disease is very rare in California.

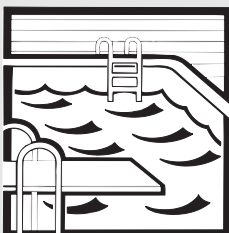
- When hiking in the woods, wear long sleeves and pants and tuck the ends of your pants into your socks. Apply insect repellent containing DEET to shoes, socks and any exposed skin areas.
- If you are out in the woods, check regularly for any ticks on you and your child.
- To remove a tick, use tweezers to gently pull the tick straight out. When pulling, grab the tick as close to your skin as possible. Wash the area and apply an antiseptic such as Neosporin or Bacitracin\*. If a rash, fever, headache or fatigue develops after four days, call your doctor or nurse practitioner.



## Water Safety

Drowning is the leading cause of death, disability and injury for children under 5 years of age in California. Teaching your child how to swim is very important, but it is not a guarantee against drowning.

- **Watch your child at all times near any water** (pools, lakes, beaches, hot tubs, buckets, toilets, bathtubs, etc.). Never leave a child alone near water for any reason, even to answer the phone, the doorbell or go to the bathroom. A child can drown in less than two minutes, even if he or she knows how to swim.
- Swimming pools should be fenced on all sides and have a self-latching gate. The latch should be out of your child's reach and facing the pool side.



\* Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used.