



July

# Member Newsletter



## Go outside, get healthier

Living in a digital world combined with the after-effects of the pandemic's isolation have made many people less likely to spend time outdoors. If you are among them, you could be missing out on the amazing physical and mental health benefits gained from simply spending time each day in a natural environment. To reap the benefits, try these suggestions:

**Keep it simple.** You don't need a lot of space or time, you just need to make getting outside a priority. Post reminders on your fridge about seasonal outdoor things to do, scope out a bench to walk to and read on or a tree to sit under, or find new parts of the neighborhood to explore. Or get some snazzy new walking shoes, a hat, or some other gear to get you excited to head outdoors.

**Set a firm "recess time."** Relive the glee of busting out of the classroom! When you get out there, open your senses to the seasonal changes around you.

**Find small ways to lure yourself outside.** Enjoy your morning coffee or lunch outside. Tend to a small garden or container plants, fill a bird feeder, or set a goal to catch the sunrise or sunset each day.

**Share the outdoors.** Meet a friend at a bench or picnic table for a short lunch or a walk-and-talk together after work. Have meetings outdoors, if possible.

**Join an activity.** Check your parks and recreation department for local walking/hiking groups, birdwatching and other activities. Sign up for neighborhood urban greening initiatives to plant trees or clean up trash.

**Experience the great outdoors in a grander way.** Visit arboretums, national parks, or check out [atlasobscura.com](https://atlasobscura.com) for awesome natural wonders in your state.

### 4 big benefits of being outdoors

- **Protects your heart**—induces relaxation, reduces stress hormones, and lowers heart rate
- **Restores and strengthens mental capacity**, increasing focus and attention; lowers risk for depression and boosts stress recovery
- **"Community greening" efforts promote better attitudes towards neighbors**, improving relationships, reducing crime, and more
- **Natural outdoor urban spaces are enticing for physical activity** and more likely to motivate people to exercise, leading to higher fitness levels

Find out more: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/features/wellness-benefits-great-outdoors>



**Feeling too stuck to move?** Talk to your healthcare professional or a qualified counselor for help.



## Protect yourself from summer pests

Summer is finally here, which means that summer bugs are also enjoying the warm weather—and the humans and animals who are spending more time outdoors. Mosquitos and ticks, among other insects, can cause a nasty bite, but more importantly, they can possibly carry and pass on diseases. By being vigilant and taking precautions like those below to prevent bites and stings, you can protect yourself, your family and pets while enjoying your time outside in the months ahead.

**Wear long sleeves, pants and socks to reduce your risk of bites**, especially during the hours when mosquitoes are typically biting. Experts recommend wearing light-colored clothing to help you spot any critters hitching a ride.

**Traveling?** Check your destination and activities to plan ahead about what steps you may need to take to protect yourself from bug bites.

**Use bug spray on any exposed skin and on your clothing** to make yourself less attractive to insects. The EPA and CDC recommend repellents that list any of the following as active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or plant-based lemon eucalyptus oil.

**Use citronella candles** to help repel mosquitoes and other bugs.

**Check your entire body for ticks** – they especially like to hide behind knees, in armpits, and behind ears, among other spots. Ticks will also ride on clothing and pets and then attach to a person later, so carefully examine all pets and gear.

**Shower soon after being outdoors** and do a thorough tick check.

**By taking precautions to prevent bites, you can protect yourself and your family and enjoy summer to the fullest!**



## Get help on the go with the Health Advocate app!

- **Learn** more about your Health Advocate services
- **Access** trustworthy health information and helpful tips
- **Connect** with a Health Advocate expert

**To download our app**, scan the QR code to the left or visit the app store on your mobile device and search “Health Advocate.”

# Celebrate our parks

Parks are at the center of so many experiences and memories. Whether you've explored local parks in your community or visited some of the monumental national parks elsewhere in the United States, these beautiful spaces are often where we learn about nature, gather with family and friends, exercise and be active, escape from stress, and so much more! In celebration of these special places, July is designated as National Park and Recreation Month. These tips will help you maximize your enjoyment of local and national parks.

Before you go, check out the park's website to familiarize yourself with the layout and rules of the park, as well as the amenities offered.

**Remember to be mindful of the park's rules**—they're in place to help protect you and other visitors, as well as protect the park. This is especially important in parks where there is dangerous terrain or large wild animals. Stay at appropriate distances from wild animals, be sensible while taking pictures, know your physical limits, and stay out of places that are off-limits.

**Bring sun protection** like sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses.

**Pack nutritious snacks or a healthy meal, plus plenty of water or sports drinks** to hydrate (as permitted by the park).



**Wear and bring appropriate gear for the activities you plan to do**, and consider bringing a first aid kit in case of injuries.

**Leave the park as you found it.** Properly dispose of trash that you may create. Avoid taking rocks, plants, or flowers (unless permitted to do so). Return any gear or equipment you may have rented or borrowed from park services.

**Visiting and taking care of our local and national parks will help protect them for future generations and the enjoyment of all.**

**For more help**, talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a qualified counselor.

## Planning for Retirement, Emotionally and Financially

Visit [HealthAdvocate.com/members](https://HealthAdvocate.com/members) to log onto your member website and access the EAP+Work/Life homepage. **Click on Webinar.**

## UV Safety Month | Always protect your skin!

To protect your skin from the sun's damaging UVA and UVB rays, follow these rules: Use a "broad-spectrum" sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) and reapply it often if you are out in midday, in the mountains or southern climates, or if swimming or sweating heavily. For extra protection, wear long-sleeved shirts, sunglasses, and a broad-brimmed hat. These same rules can also help reduce your risk of developing a sunburn-like rash and other effects if you're taking "photosensitive" drugs like antibiotics, antihistamines, statins, or are using cosmetics that contain retinoids. Talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist if you have concerns. Find out more:

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/special-features/sun-and-your-medicine>