

Summer Safety Tips

Learn how to have fun and stay safe as you enjoy the great outdoors this summer.

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What's your plan for this summer? Enjoying the water? Going camping? Firing up the grill? Whatever you prefer, we have safety steps to follow. And don't forget your furry friends. There are steps you can take to help keep them safe too.

Water Safety

Every day, an average of 11 people die in the U.S. from unintentional drowning — and one in five of those are children 14 or younger according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC). The Red Cross wants everyone to know [critical safety knowledge](#) and skills that could save your life in and around the water. We encourage families to build confidence in the water by learning to be safe, making good choices, [learning to swim](#) and how to handle emergencies.

- Preventing unsupervised access to water, providing constant, active adult supervision and knowing how to swim are critical layers of protection to help prevent drowning.
- Classes to learn [how to swim](#) are available for both children and adults. Check the [map](#) for Learn-to-Swim providers in your community. Everyone should learn [first aid](#) and [CPR](#) too, so they know what to do in an emergency.
- Download the Red Cross [Swim app](#), sponsored by The ZAC Foundation, for safety tips, kid-friendly videos and activities, and take the free Water Safety for Parents and Caregivers online course in [English](#) or in [Spanish](#).
- It's best to swim in a lifeguarded area. Always designate a “[water watcher](#)” whose sole responsibility is to keep a close eye and constant attention on everyone in and around the water until the next water watcher takes over.
- Drowning behavior is typically fast and silent. Unless rescued, a drowning person will last only 20 to 60 seconds before submerging. Reach or throw, don't go! In the event of an emergency, reach or throw an object to the person in trouble. Don't go in or you could become a victim yourself. [Test your knowledge!](#)

- It only takes a moment. A child or weak swimmer can drown in the time it takes to reply to a text, check a fishing line or apply sunscreen. For additional information about staying safe while swimming in larger bodies of water like oceans or lakes, review our beach safety tips below.



Beach Safety

Learn how to reduce the risks so your family can enjoy swimming in open water, such as the ocean and large lakes:

- Watch the weather and get out of the water at the first sign of lightning or the rumble of thunder. Stay indoors and away from water for 30 minutes after the last lightning flashes or thunder roars.
- Swim only at a beach with a lifeguard, within the designated swimming area. Obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards and ask them about local condition
- As when swimming or relaxing in a pool or hot tub, always designate a “[water watcher](#)” whose sole responsibility is to keep a close eye and constant attention on everyone in and around the water until the next water watcher takes over
- Children, inexperienced swimmers, and all boaters should wear properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets.
- Protect your neck – don’t dive in headfirst. Walk carefully into open waters. Watch out for and avoid aquatic life.
- If you are caught in a rip current, stay calm and don’t fight it. Swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current. Then, turn and swim to shore. If you can't swim to shore, float or tread water until you are free of the rip current and then head toward shore. Draw attention to yourself by waving and calling for help.



Camping Safety

If a camping trip is in your plans, know the level of ability of the people in your group and the environment around you. Plan accordingly.

- Pack a [first aid kit](#) to handle insect stings, sprains, cuts and bruises and other injuries that could happen to someone in your group. Take a Red Cross First Aid and CPR course and download the [First Aid app](#) so that you will know what to do in case help is delayed. You'll learn how to treat severe wounds, broken bones, bites and stings and more.
- Sprains and falls are some of the most common misfortunes travelers may face. Falls are the biggest threat, many due to poor decision-making, lack of skill or not being properly prepared. Dehydration is also a danger. Plan ahead for these dangers.
- Share your travel plans and locations with a family member, neighbor or friend.
- Bring nutritious food items and water, light-weight clothing to layer and supplies for any pets.



Picnic Safety

Summer is a great time to get outside for a picnic. Follow these tips to prevent illness and keep everyone safe:

- Wash your hands, utensils and workstation before preparing the food.

- Separate uncooked meats, poultry, and seafood from ready-to-eat foods like salads, fruits, vegetables, cheeses, and desserts. Use separate plates and utensils to prevent cross-contamination.
- Bring hand sanitizer if your picnic site doesn't have hand-washing facilities.
- If you are going to cook on the grill, bring a food thermometer to be sure grilled foods are cooked enough. For more information about safe grilling, review the additional tips below!



Grilling Safety

Though more than three-quarters of U.S. adults have used a grill — yet, grilling sparks more than 10,000 home fires on average each year. To avoid this, the Red Cross offers these grilling safety tips:

- Always supervise a barbecue grill when in use. Don't add charcoal starter fluid when coals have already been ignited.
- Never grill indoors — not in the house, camper, tent or any enclosed area.
- Make sure everyone, including pets, stays away from the grill.
- Keep the grill out in the open, away from the house, deck, tree branches or anything that could catch fire.
- Use the long-handled tools especially made for cooking on the grill to help keep the chef safe.
- Don't leave perishable food out in the sun.



Mosquitoes and Ticks

Don't let mosquitoes and ticks ruin your carefree summer fun. As we spend more time outdoors for activities like camping, hiking, swimming, picnicking and barbecuing, there is a greater chance of getting bitten by mosquitoes and ticks. According to the [American Mosquito Control Association](#) there are 176 known species of mosquito in the U.S.—putting Americans at risk from coast to coast. And while mosquitoes may be the most obvious detractor from summer fun – ticks are silent but dangerous. Most active during warmer months (April to September), it is especially important to be vigilant of blacklegged ticks, more commonly known as deer ticks, especially if you live in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, North-central or Northwest.

Mosquitoes and ticks are more than just itchy and annoying — if infected, these pests can pose a major health risk to people by possibly transmitting diseases. Follow these tips to [prevent mosquito](#) and [tick bites](#) this summer:

- Use insect repellents containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) when you are outdoors. Be sure to follow the directions on the package.
- Consider staying indoors at dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants and tuck your pant legs into your socks or boots.
- Use a rubber band or tape to hold pants against socks so that nothing can get under clothing.
- Tuck your shirt into your pants. Wear light-colored clothing to make it easier to see tiny insects or ticks.
- When hiking in woods and fields, stay in the middle of trails. Avoid underbrush and tall grass.
- If you are outdoors for a long time, check yourself several times during the day. Especially check in hairy areas of the body like the back of the neck and the scalp line.
- Inspect yourself carefully for insects or ticks after being outdoors or have someone else do it.
- If you have pets that go outdoors, spray with repellent made for their breed/type. Apply the repellent according to the label and check your pet for ticks often.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying sources of standing water outside of the home, such as from flowerpots, buckets and barrels.



Summer and Pets

Summer's heat can be dangerous for your family pets. Follow these steps to take to help ensure your pet stays safe this summer.

- Don't leave your pet in a hot vehicle, even for a few minutes. The inside temperature of the car can quickly reach 120 degrees even with the windows cracked open.
- Animals can suffer heat stroke, a common problem for pets in the warmer weather. Dogs with short noses or snouts, like the boxer or bulldog, are especially prone to heat stroke, along with overweight pets, those with extremely thick fur coat or any pet with upper respiratory problems such as laryngeal paralysis or collapsing trachea.
- Some of the signs of heat stroke in your pet are heavy panting, being unable to calm down, even when lying down, brick red gum color, fast pulse rate and being unable to get up.
- If you suspect your pet has heat stroke, take their temperature rectally. If the temperature is above 105 degrees, cool the animal down. The easiest way to do this is by using the water hose. Stop cooling the animal when the temperature reaches 103 degrees
- Bring your pet to the veterinarian as soon as possible as heat stroke can lead to severe organ dysfunction and damage. Download the Red Cross [Pet First Aid app](#) for instant access on how to treat heat stroke, other emergencies and general care for cats and dogs and take the [Cat and Dog First Aid Online Training](#) course.



Fireworks

The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public firework show put on by professionals, at least 500 feet away from the show.

Many states outlaw most fireworks and it's best to leave any area where untrained amateurs are using fireworks.

If you are setting fireworks off at home, follow these safety steps to help keep your community safe:

- Choose a location away from buildings and trees.
- Never give fireworks to small children, and never throw or point a firework toward people, animals, vehicles, structures or flammable materials. Always follow the instructions on the packaging.
- Be sure your spectators, including children and pets, stay well back.
- Keep a supply of water or fire extinguisher at hand. If you live in an area that's experiencing a drought, consider canceling the show this year – a stray spark that lands on dry grass or leaves can lead to a wildfire.
- Make sure the person lighting fireworks always wears eye protection.
- Light only one firework at a time and never attempt to relight "a dud."
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from children and pets.