

There may be nothing quite like sitting around a roaring fire eating s'mores, singing campfire songs, and telling scary stories. But, if you head out camping without being prepared, your memories might be less than heartwarming: the day your daughter's face was covered in mosquito bites...or the night you awakened to a bear breaking into your car...or the serious case of the "runs" you thought would never end.

Camping is not rocket science. But it does help to take a page out of the Boy and Girl Scouts' playbook: Be prepared. You'll need the basics to cook meals and sleep comfortably, but you'll also want to have what you need for the unexpected. Here are a few reminders that can set you on the right path the next time you go camping.

Work up to camping in the wilderness by doing some day trips. Read up on the area where you're headed and know how the weather patterns may shift. What clothing will you need to be comfortable? Layers often work best. Tuck pant cuffs into socks and boots to keep ticks off. Caps or hats are the best bet against the sun and insects. Long sleeves protect against sun, insects, and poison plants. You can also help your child avoid poison oak, sumac, or ivy by showing them photos of these plants ahead of time.

Teach your children to recognize landmarks and what to do if they get lost – to stay calm and stay put. Make sure you arrive with a compass and maps. A whistle for each child is also a good idea.

After a day out on the trail, check yourself and your children for ticks. They tend to hide on the scalp, under the arms, and in the groin area. These parasites carry serious infections such as Lyme disease. If you need to remove a tick, keep an eye out for a red ring, a sign of Lyme disease that might appear about a week later.

At home, you probably take water for granted. You can't do that while camping. You'll need an ample supply. Know whether drinkable water will be available at the campsite or if you will need to bring your own. Streams and creeks may provide great swimming holes, but are definitely off-limits for drinking. They commonly contain parasites that can make your last case of food poisoning seem like a picnic! If you can't bring bottled water, you can use water filters or purify water with iodine tablets that dissolve in the water. Boiling works, too, but this takes time and plenty of propane. Disposable wipes can be helpful for keeping hands and dishes clean.<sup>1</sup>

As for meals, don't overdo. Bring packaged energy bars, trail mix, oranges, and other items that travel well in a backpack. Make sure you have enough ice for your perishables. Don't eat any that have been out for more than two hours. Steer clear of wild berries and mushrooms. Some can be very toxic. And, follow all rules about food storage – these aren't mindless rules. They're for *your* own safety and that of your fellow campers.

Here are some other first-aid items you'll need to pack. You can find most of these in our store:

- Citronella-based products or insect repellent with no more than 10 to 30 percent DEET (Use DEET-containing products only on children age 2 and older.)
- Oral antihistamines for allergic reactions or itchy rashes
- Calamine or hydrocortisone cream (1%) for poison ivy and other rashes
- Poisonous plant protectives
- Antibiotic cream
- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Bandages, blister dressings, sterile gauze pads, and large wound dressings
- A cold pack
- Splinting materials and self-adhesive roller bandages
- Adhesive tape
- Tweezers and needles to remove splinters or ticks
- Alcohol pads
- Antiseptic soap<sup>2</sup>

The great outdoors has lots to offer, be prepared and bring back some happy memories.



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