PARENTS, TEACHERS, YOUTH LEADERS

Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Express Your Health!

September 2005

# Backpacking and Camping

## Immunizations

Some of the risks of camping are getting injured or catching an infectious disease from someone else because of close living conditions. Vaccinations are one way to protect against serious consequences. If you have or work with kids who are 11 or 12 years old, they may be due for a tetanus booster, and it's a good time to check on other vaccinations as well. A healthcare provider may recommend a vaccine for pertussis (whooping cough), meningococcal vaccine, or, in some areas, a hepatitis A vaccination. You can help make kids and their parents aware of these prevention measures.

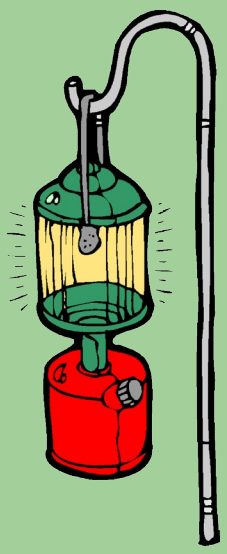
**Childhood Immunization Schedule**
www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm#printable

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is odorless and colorless. If it builds up in your home, it can cause illness or even death—more than 500 Americans are killed by carbon monoxide poisoning every year.

Evening temperatures often drop unexpectedly, even during warmer months of the year. Campers may not realize that operating fuel-burning camping heaters, portable gas stoves, or charcoal grills inside tents and campers can cause dangerous amounts of CO to build up. CO from these sources can be a danger to the health of people and pets. In particular, people who are sleeping may not wake up and recognize the early symptoms of CO poisoning and take action to protect themselves. The most common signs of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. People who are sleeping can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.

- Fuel-burning equipment such as camping stoves, camping heaters, fuel-burning lanterns, and charcoal grills should never be used inside a tent, camper, or other enclosed shelter. Opening tent flaps, doors, or windows is not sufficient to prevent build-up of CO concentrations from these devices.



- When using fuel-burning devices outdoors, the exhaust should not vent into enclosed shelters.
- Rather than relying on fuel-burning appliances to supply heat, campers should leave home with adequate bedding and clothing and should consume extra calories and fluids during the outing to prevent hypothermia (a dangerous loss of body warmth that can cause death).

**Carbon Monoxide Prevention**
www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm

# Express Your Health!

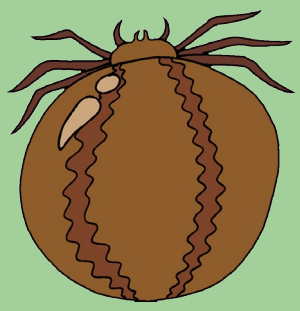
## Wildlife

Like other animals, wild animals and non-human primates (monkeys) can get diseases. Some of these diseases, called zoonoses, can cause illness in people. Since wild animals (including monkeys, raccoons, and skunks) can carry diseases that are dangerous to people, CDC discourages direct contact with wildlife. Enjoy watching animals from a safe distance. Touching wild animals may harm you or the animal. Learn more about diseases and wildlife, including rabies, hantavirus, *Giardia* infection, and more.

**Diseases from Wildlife**
www.cdc.gov/healthypets/animals/wildlife.htm

## Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi* (boar-ELL-ee-uh burg-dorf-ERR-eye). Some people with Lyme disease have symptoms, including a "bull's-eye" rash with fever, headache, and muscle or joint pain.



People get Lyme disease when they are bitten by ticks carrying *B. burgdorferi*. Ticks that carry Lyme disease are very small and can be hard to see. These tiny ticks bite mice infected with Lyme disease and then bite people or other animals, such as dogs and horses, passing the disease to them.

Protect yourself from Lyme disease.

- Whenever possible, you should avoid entering areas that are likely to be infested with ticks, particularly in spring and summer when nymphal ticks feed.
- If you are in an area with ticks, you should wear light-colored clothing so that ticks can be spotted more easily and removed before becoming attached.
- If you are in an area with ticks, wear long-sleeved shirts and tuck your pants into socks. You may also want to wear high rubber boots (since ticks are usually located close to the ground).
- Application of insect repellents containing DEET (N,N diethyl-m-toluamide) to clothes and exposed skin, and permethrin (which kills ticks on contact) to clothes, should also help reduce the risk of tick attachment. DEET can be used safely on children and adults but should be applied according to Environmental Protection Agency guidelines to reduce the possibility of toxicity.
- Since transmission of *B. burgdorferi* from an infected tick is unlikely to occur before 36 hours of tick attachment, check for ticks daily and remove them promptly. Embedded ticks should be removed by using fine-tipped tweezers. Cleanse the area with an antiseptic.
- You can reduce the number of ticks around your home by removing leaf litter and brush- and wood-piles around your house and at the edge of your yard. By clearing trees and brush in your yard, you can reduce the likelihood that deer, rodents, and ticks will live there.

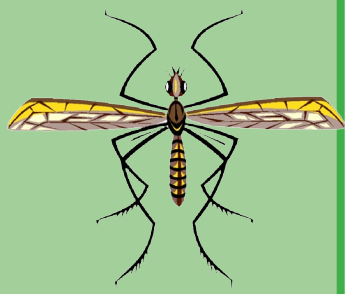
**Lyme Disease and Animals**
www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/lyme.htm

# Express Your Health!

## West Nile Virus

West Nile virus (WNV) is a potentially serious illness. The easiest and best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.

- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient. Follow the directions on the package.
- Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times or consider staying indoors during these hours.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.



**Fight the Bite**
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm

## Sun Protection

Ultraviolet (UV) rays are a part of sunlight that is an invisible form of radiation. UV exposure appears to be the most important environmental factor in the development of skin cancer and a primary factor in the development of lip cancer. Although getting some sun exposure can yield a few positive benefits, excessive and unprotected exposure to the sun can result in premature aging and undesirable changes in skin texture. Such exposure has been associated with various types of skin cancer, including melanoma, one of the most serious and deadly forms. UV rays also have been found to be associated with various eye conditions, such as cataracts.

Protect yourself from the sun's UV rays.

- Seek shade. When possible, avoid outdoor activities during midday, when the sun's rays are strongest. This usually means the hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Cover up. Wear protective clothing, such as a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, and long pants.
- Wear sunglasses. For eye protection, wear wraparound sunglasses that provide 100 percent UV ray protection.

- Use sunscreen. Always wear a broad-spectrum (protection against both UVA and UVB rays) sunscreen and lipscreen with at least SPF 15. Remember to reapply as indicated by the manufacturer's directions.

**Frequently Asked Questions: Skin Cancer**
www.cdc.gov/chooseyourcover/qanda.htm