Be prepared! Essential inventory for your first aid kit

Summertime often means more time outside at the park, beach, lake, pool, or even just your own backyard. While being outdoors is fun, it also brings potential risks for injuries, including cuts and scrapes, sunburn and bug bites, among others. However, being prepared with a proper first aid kit to treat these minor, yet common, issues can help you relax and better enjoy being outdoors. Whether you buy a first aid kit or decide to make your own, here are a few essential items you should make sure are included.

**Summertime-specific essentials:**
- Sunscreen, to guard against sunburn
- Bug spray, insect repellent, and/or bite/sting medication
- Antibiotic ointment or cream
- Different sized bandages for scrapes and cuts
- Lip balm with sunscreen/SPF
- Aloe, which is great for soothing sunburns
- An anti-itch lotion such as Calamine in case you encounter poison ivy
- A prescription injectable epinephrine for those known to have allergies to bites, stings or poison ivy

Protect your skin while enjoying the outdoors

While it’s great to soak up the sunshine and fresh air during summer months, it is also important to take steps to protect your skin while doing so. Certain insects and pests, plants like poison ivy and the sun’s strong rays can all wreak havoc on your skin if you don’t take precautions. Read on for tips to protect yourself from these common yet frustrating causes of skin woes.

**Protect your skin from irritating plants**

Poison ivy, and its cousins poison oak and poison sumac, are typically found in wooded areas; however, they can also pop up in gardens, at the edge of your yard, and in other spots with brush and weeds. The best way to prevent a reaction is to avoid the plant by knowing what it looks like and staying clear. Also keep in mind that you can develop the rash if you touch an object or pet that has the oil from the plant on them – so make sure to clean anything (or anyone!) that may have come in contact with the plant.

**Protect your skin from bug bites, stings and more**

Mosquitoes and ticks, among other insects, can cause a nasty bite, but more importantly, they can possibly carry and pass on diseases including Zika, West Nile and Lyme (depending on where you live). Try wearing long sleeves, pants and socks to reduce your risk of being bitten. Use bug spray on any exposed skin and on your clothing to repel insects.
Can’t tear yourself away from smartphone or other devices? It’s time for a digital detox!

Do you feel like you’re missing out on something when you’re not online? Are your friends or family complaining about your time spent texting, emailing, gaming, or browsing Facebook or the web? Are you depressed, restless, moody or nervous when you’re offline and okay again when you’re online? If so, you may have a “digital addiction” which can affect your brain, as well as your mental, emotional and physical health.

What you can do: Follow these steps to curb your use of digital technology so it enhances your life rather than detracts from it.

- **Silence your cell phone** or leave it behind when attending events or during outings or activities
- **Unplug completely** for a set amount of time each day
- **Make screen time off limits** when you are with friends and family
- **Make meals technology-free** as a chance to reconnect with others at the table
- **Don’t take your phone to bed** or use it as an alarm clock
- **Turn off your cell phone at work**
- **Avoid responding immediately** to every text

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