

Before You Go...

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Before taking off on any recreation activity, the best plan is to plan ahead. Consider the following:

- Assess your experience level
- Know the hazards & how to control them
- Check you gear BEFORE you leave
- Plan for the unexpected & emergencies
- Expect the weather to change
- Know your limits... don't exceed them
- Warm-up & stretch before physical activities
- Make a trip plan to leave with others
- Let someone know where you are going & when you will return
- Drugs, alcohol and recreation are a dangerous mix

We're all ready for some fun. Life is a time full of enjoyable, and sometimes dangerous, activities. We'll be taking a look at a few of these seemingly harmless endeavors.

"Hey, lets have a beer..." Alcohol is thought to be a stimulant but in reality it is a depressant. Alcohol impairs judgment, coordination and performance. It often results in risk-taking behavior and is the major cause of automobile accidents.

"Hey, it's only 200 miles, we can make it..." Fatigue decreases awareness and reflexes. It is often a factor in automobile accidents and can spoil a holiday trip. Fatigue may result from over exertion, long periods of driving, unusual sleeping patterns, or time changes as you travel cross country on vacation. Fatigue is often unnoticed and it can kill.

"Why don't you drive the boat..."? Boating can be fun, but it can also be very deadly. If you are going boating know how to use all of the equipment and know the rules of boating traffic. Life vests may not look cool, but they save lives. Make sure you know if you have a non-swimmer with you and take extra precautions. Alcohol will kill just as fast in a boat as it can in a car.

"I don't need any sun screen, I never burn..." Every year, many people end up in the hospital with 3rd and 2nd degree burns due to over exposure to the sun. Not only that, it can also cause cancer over a length of time, so take it easy the first few times you are outside. Remember you have all summer to work on your tan.

"That doesn't look so hard, I could do it..." Don't try any new sport or recreational activity unless you have the proper equipment, some instruction, and never try anything new if you've been drinking.

"Why not take the kids on a camping trip ..." Camping can be fun and very relaxing. Using lighter fluid to start the camp fire, however, can be very painful. Cutting off a finger or having stitches put in you leg after hitting it with a sharp ax can also spoil your afternoon. Having small children lost in rugged camping areas is another thing that happens all too often. Can you tell if that is a garden snake or a cottonmouth that is curled up by your sleeping bag? Do you really know how to use that white gas stove your dad gave you? Is that tent a little to close to the fire? If you plan to hike or camp make sure you know what you're doing and that it will be a safe and enjoyable trip.

The best thing to take on any outing is common sense and the best thing to bring back is all the people who went with you.

For additional information, contact your local Outreach and Extension Center or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program, 1.800.995.8503.

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