

Hike for Health // 4 Safety Tips

HIKE FOR HEALTH: 4 SAFETY TIPS



LIVE WELL UTAH

A great way to be physically active in Utah is hiking. You can choose hikes to match the abilities of everyone in the family. Hiking outdoors can help you get Vitamin D (don't forget the sunblock), fresh air, and can reduce stress.

Before you head out, consider the following tips for staying safe as you hike.

1. **Let someone know before you go.** Make sure to have someone expecting you after your hike. Some trails may not have rangers checking for lost hikers every day. Having someone who can inform them that you are missing can be lifesaving.
2. **Do your research and gear up for the conditions.** Find out from experts what to expect on the hike. Be prepared with the correct gear and supplies. Lots of sun and no shade? Make sure to have sunblock and a hat. Lodged logs and rocks? Be prepared to scramble or bring some climbing gear. Check road and weather conditions with the local ranger station. It is also important to be aware of weather forecasts in locations where rain may lead to a flash flood where you are hoping to hike. Be willing to cancel a trip if the conditions are risky. There may be safer alternative hikes in the area.
3. **Stay hydrated.** When temperatures are high, we lose more water as we sweat. You may need to take more water than you think. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recommends that day hikers in the Paria Wilderness Area in Southern Utah and Northern Arizona pack at least a gallon of water per person in the summer. Check with park service, forest service, or BLM officials to find out how much water is recommended for your particular hike.
4. **Orient yourself on your way to help you get back out.** When hiking to a certain site, instructions often focus on how to get you there. This can sometimes lead

to people being confused about how to get back to the trailhead. Stop and turn around (maybe even take a picture) to help you be more familiar with how the landscape will look on your way back. Search for large land markers like mountain ranges that can help you keep going in the right direction – both in and out.

Safe hiking, and happy trails!

This article was written by LaCee Jimenez, Food \$ense (SNAP-Ed) Coordinator with Utah State University Extension