



GARDENING HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS

Gardening can be a great way to enjoy the outdoors, get physical activity, beautify the community, and grow nutritious fruits and vegetables. Whether you are a beginner or an expert gardener, health and safety are important. This article provides some tips to help keep you safe and healthy so that you can enjoy the beauty and bounty gardening can bring.

DRESS TO PROTECT

Gear up to protect yourself from lawn and garden chemicals, equipment, insects, and the sun.

Wear safety goggles, sturdy shoes, and long pants when using lawn mowers and other machinery.

Protect your hearing when using machinery. If you have to raise your voice to talk to someone who is an arm's length away, the noise can be potentially harmful to your hearing.

Wear gloves to lower the risk for skin irritations, cuts, and certain contaminants.

Protect yourself from diseases caused by mosquitoes and ticks. Use insect repellent containing DEET. Wear clothing treated with permethrin, long-sleeved shirts, and pants tucked in your socks. You may also want to wear high rubber boots, since ticks are usually located close to the ground.

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PLAN YOUR VACATION WELL to Get the Most Out of It

DEVISE A STRATEGY TO AVOID POST-TRIP LETDOWN.

If it lasted forever, it wouldn't be a vacation. Yet many people dread the return to their routine as strongly as they anticipated their getaway. Call it the "post-vacation blues."

"We expect vacations to have an almost magical quality—and some people get very upset if things don't go well," said Barry Miller, a psychologist and professor at Pace University in New York. "Even when it's a positive vacation, going back to ordinary life can be depressing."

A letdown after a vacation is much like the day after any big event. The excitement is gone—but negatives can linger such as family squabbles, neglected projects at work, and an overextended bank account.

Miller says time off is vital to restoring the human body and spirit. But people too often believe when they climb aboard a plane, whatever is bothering them on the ground will dissolve into thin air.

He sees this most frequently in troubled marriages when the spouses embark on a second honeymoon. "When couples go on vacation, there's a tendency to believe all their problems will go away," he said. "When they come back and nothing's changed, there's a sense of disappointment."

But for Linda Newman of Silver Spring, Maryland, coming home from vacation is a positive thing. She luxuriates in a hot shower. She rejoices in sleeping in her own bed. Newman and her husband, Michael, get their holiday snapshots developed as quickly as possible, so they can sit together, talk about the trip, and relive the happy moments. "There's never a letdown because we know it's not the last vacation," she said. "We immediately start planning the next trip."

PLAN YOUR RETURN BEFORE YOU LEAVE.

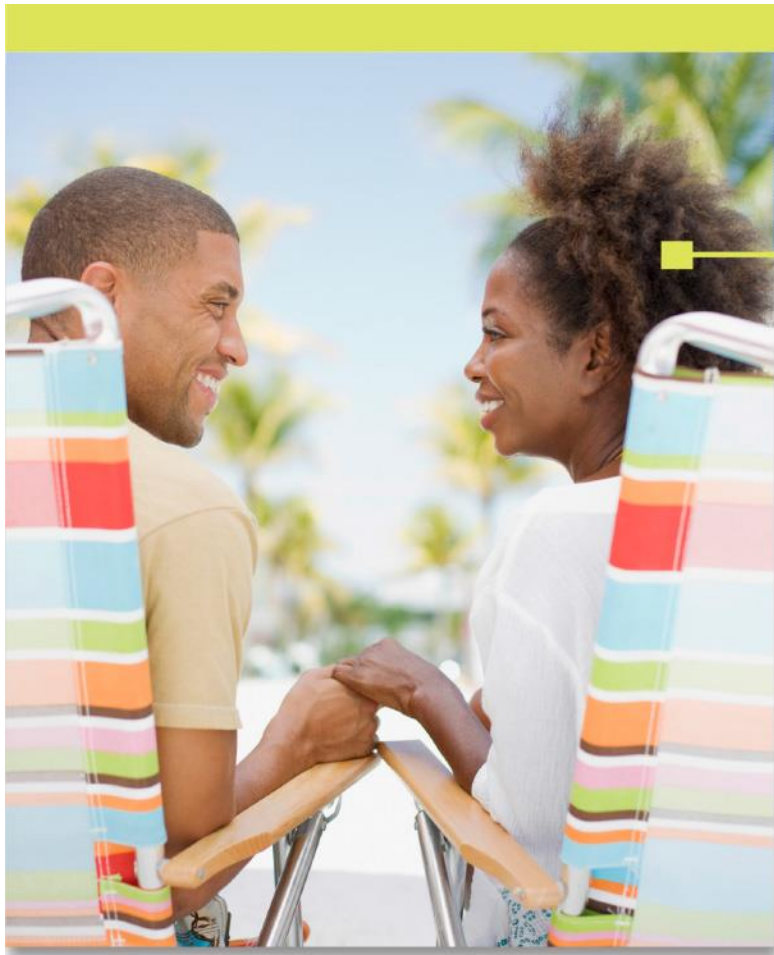
Some of the most effective steps should be taken before you pack your bags.

For example, be sure to wrap up important tasks at work so you won't come home to a crisis.

Set yourself up for a successful trip by researching the place you're visiting. You will be far less likely to miss what might be a fabulous experience—and lamenting you missed it after you return home. "We really plan our trips so we have no regrets about not having seen the things we want," Newman said. "But even if we do, we know we can always go back again."

Miller said cramming too much activity into too little time can trigger sadness about not getting enough rest. But he also said going on a trip without some kind of game plan can spur remorse.

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PLAN YOUR VACATION WELL...

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He recalled a trip to Buenos Aires, Argentina, a place he knew almost nothing about. His plan was to rely on the advice of a professional acquaintance who lived in Argentina—"and go with the flow."

"Looking back, I felt a bit of a letdown when I returned," he said. "I didn't have a terrible trip, but I could have gotten a whole lot more out of it."

Gary Mendes and his friend Darrell Weber looked at the planning of their 19-day trip to Switzerland and France as a vacation before the vacation. They agreed to give themselves a wide variety of options—and not to be upset because they couldn't experience every one of them.

"We read books and articles and mapped out an itinerary that was so full, we knew ahead of time we couldn't possibly do it all," said Mendes, of Altadena, California.

"So, we always had a sense of there was plenty to choose from."

He prolonged the pleasure of the trip by compiling a journal. He refers to it whenever he wishes to recall his vacation. "Keeping a travel journal helped to keep things

fresh," Mendes said. "After the vacation, I reviewed the journals and found lots of things to add that for some reason didn't get committed to paper sooner."

Mendes doesn't feel depressed when he must return to work. He attributes that to being happy in his job.

Stephen Price manages Spring Creek Ranch, a resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. "But even folks who work in vacation destinations take breaks," said Price, who recently returned from a getaway in the Caribbean. "My wife and I always make sure we have a day off between the time we get back and the day we start working again," he said. "We also line up massages to help us relax."

DIFFERING VACATION NEEDS.

Miller said different people have varying needs for time away from jobs or other obligations. That means one person might be pining to go home, while another person might feel shortchanged because the time off wasn't longer.

He points to a couple who have a vacation home in the Hamptons, the playground of the East Coast elite, in Long Island, New York. They've arrived at a happy compromise. "She has a greater need for time off, so frequently she'll go a day ahead or stay a day longer," he said.

Miller also said short vacations can be just as refreshing as longer trips. That strategy also can be less costly, lessening the chances of feeling blue when you come home because you've parted with too much green. "Some people feel guilty about spending money on themselves," he said. "Others don't mind spending it, but find it causes them problems later."

Still, it doesn't cost anything to read about interesting places and begin gathering travel brochures. As for Mendes and his friend, they're already planning their next adventure. "We're going to Disney World," Mendes said.

Smith, E. (Reviewed 2013). Plan your vacation well to get the most out of it. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.



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Lower your risk for sunburn and skin cancer. Wear long sleeves, wide-brimmed hats, sun shades, and sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.

PUT SAFETY FIRST.

Powered and unpowered tools and equipment can cause serious injury. Limit distractions, use chemicals and equipment properly, and be aware of hazards to lower your risk for injury. Follow instructions and warning labels on chemicals and lawn and garden equipment.

Make sure equipment is working properly.

Sharpen tools carefully.

Keep harmful chemicals, tools, and equipment out of children's reach.

WATCH OUT FOR HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS.

Even being out in short periods of time in high temperatures can cause serious health problems. Monitor your activities and time in the sun to lower your risk for heat-related illness.

Drink plenty of water throughout the day to replace lost fluids. Don't wait until you're thirsty.

Avoid drinking liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar, especially in the heat. These actually cause you to lose more body fluid instead of replenishing body fluid.

Take breaks often. Try to rest in shady areas so that your body's thermostat will have a chance to recover. Stop working if you experience breathlessness or muscle soreness.

Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including extremely high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness.

Watch out for people who are at higher risk for heat-related illness, including infants and children up to 4 years of age; people 65 years of age or older; people who are overweight; people who push themselves too hard during work or exercise; and people who are physically ill or who take certain medications (i.e. for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation).

Eat healthy foods to help keep you energized.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS.

Talk to your health care provider if you have physical, mental, or environmental concerns that may impair your ability to work in the garden safely.

If you have arthritis, use tools that are easy to grasp and that fit your ability. Research shows that moderate physical activity three or more days per week can give you more energy and can help relieve arthritis pain and stiffness.

If you are taking medications that may make you drowsy or impair your judgment or reaction time, don't operate machinery, climb ladders, or do activities that may increase your risk for injury.

Listen to your body. Monitor your level of fatigue, heart rate, and physical discomfort.

Call 911 if you get injured, experience chest and arm pain, dizziness, lightheadedness, or heat-related illness.

ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

Gardening is an excellent way to get physical activity. Active people are less likely than inactive people to be obese or have high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, coronary artery disease, stroke, depression, colon cancer, and premature death.

Be active for at least 2½ hours per week. Include activities that raise your breathing and heart rates and that strengthen your muscles. You can burn 150 calories by gardening (standing) for approximately 30-45 minutes. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour per day.

If you have been inactive, start out with just a few minutes of physical activity each day. Gradually build up time and intensity.

GET VACCINATED.

Vaccinations can prevent many diseases and save lives. All adults should get a tetanus vaccination every 10 years. Tetanus lives in the soil and enters the body through breaks in the skin. Because gardeners use sharp tools, dig in the dirt, and handle plants with sharp points, they are particularly prone to tetanus infections.

Before you start gardening this season, make sure your tetanus/diphtheria (Td) vaccination is up to date.

Ask your health care provider if you need any other vaccinations.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Modified 2012, April 2). Gardening health and safety tips. Retrieved October 30, 2012, from <http://www.cdc.gov>.



TOP TEN TAX TIME TIPS

It's that time of the year again. The income tax filing season has begun, and important tax documents should be arriving in the mail. Even though your return is not due until April, getting an early start will make filing easier. Here are the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) top 10 tips that will help your tax filing process run smoother than ever this year.

1. Start gathering your records. Round up any documents or forms you'll need when filing your taxes: receipts, canceled checks, and other documents that support income or deductions you're claiming on your return.
2. Be on the lookout. W-2s and 1099s will be coming soon; you'll need these to file your tax return.
3. Use Free File. Let Free File do the hard work for you with brand-name tax software or online fillable forms. It's available exclusively at <http://www.irs.gov>. Everyone can find an option to prepare their tax return and e-file it for free.
4. Try IRS e-file. IRS e-file has become the safe, easy, and most common way to file a tax return. Last year, 70% of taxpayers—99 million people—used IRS e-file. This is your chance to give it a try. IRS e-file is approaching 1 billion returns processed safely and securely. If you owe taxes, you have payment options to file immediately and pay by the tax deadline. Best of all, combine e-file with direct deposit and you get your refund in as few as 10 days.
5. Consider other filing options. There are many different options for filing your tax return. You can prepare it yourself or go to a tax preparer. You may be eligible for free face-to-face help at an IRS office or volunteer site. Give yourself time to weigh all the different options and find the one that best suits your needs.
6. Consider direct deposit. If you elect to have your refund directly deposited into your bank account, you'll receive it faster than waiting for a paper check.
7. Visit the IRS Web site again and again. The official IRS Web site is a great place to find everything you'll need to file your tax return: forms, publications, tips, answers to frequently asked questions, and updates on tax law changes.
8. Remember this number: 17. Check out IRS Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax on the IRS Web site. It's a comprehensive collection of information for taxpayers highlighting everything you'll need to know when filing your return.
9. Review! Review! Review! Don't rush. We all make mistakes when we rush. Mistakes will slow down the processing of your return. Be sure to double-check all the Social Security numbers and math calculations on your return, as these are the most common errors made by taxpayers.
10. Don't panic! If you run into a problem, remember the IRS is here to help. Try visiting <http://www.irs.gov> or call toll-free at (800) 829-1040.

Internal Revenue Service. (Updated 2012, September 10). IRS Tax Tip 2011-01. Top 10 Tax Time Tips. Retrieved January 24, 2013, from <http://www.irs.gov>.



LAUGHING IS GOOD FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD

If your doctor said, “Take two jokes and call me in the morning,” would you laugh? You should—laughter is good for you and your child’s mental and physical well-being.

Some mental health professionals say humor is one of the best ways to relieve stress, and research proves that laughter plays a key role in human life. A good laugh loosens muscles, lowers blood pressure, and might lower levels of hormones that create stress and weaken immunity. When you laugh, your body moves blood to your heart and lungs, boosting your energy level and making you feel better instantly. It also aids communication and creates a sense of closeness between you and the people with whom you’re laughing.

Until recently, researchers knew that laughing was good for people, but they didn’t really understand how. New evidence points to changes in the brain—not the imaginary funny bone—as the source for laughter.

Researchers found that when people laugh, a part of the brain’s reward system is triggered. In this reward system, a person feels pleasure and wants to have the same pleasant feelings over and over again. The areas in the brain triggered by humor are the same ones that are triggered by drugs like amphetamines and cocaine.

What does this mean for you and your child? According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, one reason that young people choose to use drugs is simply to feel good. They seek new or thrilling things to have a good time. The good news is that the kids who use drugs to feel good are the ones who are most likely to respond to prevention messages that teach them about the harmful effects of drugs on their bodies. Teens also are swayed mostly by the powerful protective factor of having strong and loving parents who take notice and take part in all aspects of their lives. These kids have the best chances of being successfully taught to seek other ways of having fun.

Laughing and fun go hand in hand, and laughing together as a family will bring you closer together, improve your mental and physical health, and might help prevent your child from using drugs. Look for laughs to stay healthy!

Mobbs, D.; Greicius, M.D.; Abdel-Azim, E.; Menon, V.; & Reiss, A.L. (2003). Humor modulates the mesolimbic reward centers. *Neuron*, 40, 1041-1048.

Leshner, A.I. (Updated 2005, June 14). Why do Sally and Johnny use drugs? Washington, DC: National Institute on Drug Abuse.

