

PARENT

HEALTH BULLETIN



SEPTEMBER 2024

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

STEP INTO NATURE: HIKING FOR HEALTH



Hiking is a great activity for whole families to do together. It gets kids and adults alike away from screens, enjoying nature, and spending quality time together. Fall is the perfect time to plan a family hike. Mild weather, beautiful scenery, and gentle breezes make an ideal outdoor experience!

Hiking is also a great physical activity. Hiking uses more muscles than a normal walk, both in your legs and core. You might find that you are sore after a hike — that is a good thing! It means you are engaging muscles that don't get as much regular use. Hiking also requires more oxygen, so it makes your heart and lungs work harder. This makes hiking a great way to build endurance. Hiking on uneven surfaces improves balance and coordination for both kids and adults.

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There are also mental benefits to hiking. Many people say that being in nature helps them to feel less stress, improves their mood, and helps them to sleep better at night. All great reasons to get outdoors and go for a hike!

It is easier said than done, however, to take kids on any kind of adventure. To help your hike succeed, there are a few things to consider when taking kids on a hike.

- **Plan hikes to see interesting things.** A summit lookout, interesting rock formations, or waterfalls are great destination hikes to keep kids engaged.
- **Come prepared.** Remember a bag with water, bug spray, snacks (if needed), and a way to navigate.
- **Keep kids in view.** Set boundaries about how far ahead or behind an adult you feel comfortable with them being.
- **Stay on the trail.** Limit exposure to unwanted poisonous plants and animal encounters by staying on marked trails.
- **Take regular breaks.** Kids may wear out faster than adults. A short break to reset may help them last longer.
- **Consider bringing an activity** like a nature journal or scavenger hunt to encourage curiosity and interest.

If you are looking for places to hike close to home or farther away, here are a few resources on hiking opportunities in Kentucky.

- Plan a hike at a Kentucky state park. Their website has information about trail head locations, trail lengths, and other helpful information: <https://parks.ky.gov/things-to-do/trails/hiking>.
- Kentucky has seven national parks as well, many with trails to hike and sights to see: <https://www.nps.gov/state/ky>.
- Kentucky Tourism has also curated a list of destinations with hiking trails and information to plan trips to visit each location: <https://www.kentuckytourism.com/things-to-do/outdoors/outdoor-recreation/hiking>.

REFERENCE:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/hike-your-way-to-better-health>

ADULT
HEALTH BULLETIN

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