

Outdoors health tips from the Posse

Heart health and the outdoors

Heart attacks are the leading cause of death in the United States as more than 1.5 million Americans suffer one each year. Over half a million people die annually in the United States from them.

It would seem that heart problems would lead the way on the list of outdoor related deaths, but such is not the case. Heart attacks rank No. 4 on the list of outdoor related deaths.

We all know by now old Mother Nature does not have a sense of humor when it comes to us invading her domain, and there is no limit to the ways she can do you in. The score can get settled even faster when Mr. Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame, teams up with the old lady in an attempt to make you as dead as easy credit.

Falls stand out in first place as the No. 1 killer of people in the outdoors. This includes falling off cliffs, waterfalls and sliding down steep slopes. Avalanches and drowning are in the second and third place on the list. These you cannot always prevent, as accidents will happen when you are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Just to put this all in perspective, before you begin to think that the outdoors is fraught with peril, we will review a few numbers from the National Center For Health Statistics.

About 213,000 people are visiting the emergency room annually because of an outdoor related injury. Your chances of dying while hiking in the mountains is 1 in 15,700 annually or a 0.0064-percent chance. Not really all that bad unless you are that unlucky guy. If your lucky number at blackjack is 23, you may not want to venture outdoors.

We bring much of our problems on because of



Mark Rackay
Tips from the Posse

poor planning, lack of preparation and just plain bad practices. Take for example the vacationer who is overweight, out of shape and basically running on nerves. He visits Colorado on vacation and immediately heads for the high country.

His altitude back home is somewhere around sea level, and allowing no time for acclimation, he heads up to 10,000 feet for a hike. Murphy and Mother Nature are there waiting for him.

In 1993, Martin Burtscher, a physiologist completed a study in tracking how many people experienced sudden cardiac death while exercising in the mountains compared to exercising at sea level. He noted that the overall risk of cardiac death during mountain hiking for men over the age of 34 was increased by a factor of 4.3.

The study indicated the biggest predictor of a heart attack was not the altitude at which it occurred, but rather the age and sex of the individual and whether they'd taken time to acclimate. No increase in risk was found for men who participated regularly in mountain sports.

To me, this means we need to pay special attention to our out of state visitors and make sure they take time to acclimate to the altitude.



The secret to receiving stress is outdoors, fresh air and woods. Take the snow machine up for a romp in the snow and watch the stress melt away. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

Here are a few things you can do to help lower your risk:

•**See your doctor and get checked out on a regular basis.** Heart attacks affect men pushing 50 more than anyone else. If you have not been very active lately, get checked out sooner than later.

•**Examine your exercise routine.** I know, we all get sick of hearing this but it means everything. Good, high exertion cardio exercise, 30 minutes a day and a minimum of three times a week. Throw in some strength training to build some muscles as well. If you are planning a pack trip or a big game hunt, start working out at least three months prior to the trip.

•**Take time to acclimate to the altitude.** Drink plenty of water and get plenty of rest. Stop for a day or two in Montrose before heading up any further in the mountains. When you get to the high altitude, take your time. Spend a day in camp before

hitting the trails.

•**Watch your pace while on the hike.** Don't push yourself past your limits. If you cannot maintain a normal conversation because of your breathing, you are going to fast.

When it comes to heart attacks in the great outdoors there is much you can do to prevent them. Take the time and get into the best physical shape you can. While exercise is important, so is plenty of rest. Watch your diet and eat lots of fresh vegetables and lower the fat intake.

We spend lots of time getting our pack ready, ATV primed up, and the 4-wheeled sleigh that will get us there. Be a better friend to your heart and take care of yourself. •

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press who serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse, call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

The many benefits of aerobic exercise

A great workout routine combines strength training and aerobic exercise. But even some ardent exercise enthusiasts may not understand just how valuable aerobic exercise is. Running on the treadmill or using an elliptical machine might not be the most engaging exercises, but the benefits of aerobic exercise, often referred to as "cardio," are undeniable.

• **Aerobic exercise** helps people maintain healthy weights. Aerobic exercise can help men and women maintain healthy weights over the long-term. The foods people eat and the fat they store provides energy the body uses as fuel during cardiovascular exercise. The longer and more intense aerobic exercise sessions are, the more calories the body burns during those sessions. Successful weight loss programs should include routine aerobic exercise.

• **Aerobic exercise** lowers risk for various diseases. Aerobic exercise has been proven to lower people's risk for various diseases, including diabetes, heart disease and depression. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, high levels of cardiovascular fitness have been linked to a 50 percent reduction in the risk for cardiovascular disease.

• **Aerobic exercise** can improve muscle tone. Exercise enthusiasts who want their efforts in the gym to show should know that aerobic exercise can improve muscle tone and get men and women closer to the ripped appearance they might be looking for. Interval training, in which cardio routines alternate between high and moderate intensity, is a great way to burn additional fat during aerobic exercise.

• **Aerobic exercise** can improve mood. Studies have shown that aerobic exercise improves mood. In addition to its impact on body image, aerobic exercise triggers the release of endorphins, a group of hormones that can quickly and effectively improve mood. Studies have also shown that physical activity can help the body combat anxiety and stress. •



In Motion • Therapy

**Physical Therapy • Occupational Therapy • Hand Therapy
Athletic Training • Speech Therapy**

- Aquatic Therapy - on site
- Custom Splinting
- Manual Therapy
- Dry Needling
- IASTM

- Athletic Training Services
- Sports Specific Training
- Free Injury Screens
- Certified Kinesiotape Practitioners
- Pre-Participation Physicals



GET IN MOTION

Montrose • Delta • Ridgway

**611 East Star Ct., Suite B, Montrose
240 C North Palmer, Delta
160 South Amelia, Ridgway
(970) 249-1646
www.inmotiontherapymontrose.com**