

Avoid most common outdoor injuries



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

When we take to the trails, we accept the inherent risk of a possible injury.

Perhaps the subtle danger of our outdoor activity is part of the virile attraction to the great backcountry.

Every trip I take, I hope to not come home in the cargo section of the airplane sporting a toe tag, and so far, so good.

I understand the theory that when your number is up, there is nothing you can do about it.

Call it kismet.

There will be a day when Murphy, of Murphy's Law, comes a-calling for me.

This particular day will be the day, and Murphy will be the personal representative of my kismet. Until then, I will keep on keeping on.

What I am getting at is to at least be trained to handle the pitfalls or injuries you are most likely to encounter.

When I hunted deer in the Florida Everglades on an airboat.



With a little preparation for the possibility of what type of injury you are most likely to encounter, you may not have to return from your outdoor adventure this way. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

When I hunted deer in the Florida Everglades on an airboat, there was zero chance I would have to deal with frostbite or frost nip. Heat-related issues were a definite concern. Therefore, I focused my preparation, supplies, and training on the most likely problems I would have to deal with.

Consider where your trip is going to take you and what the weather, climate and terrain is going to be like.

Always use a worst-case scenario because if you are like me, that is what you will experience. Pack the supplies for those possible problems and know how to use them.

Let's start out with a hiking or backpacking/camping trip to the mountains.

In the summertime, one problem you are most likely to encounter is sunburn. Fortunately, it is easier to prevent than to cure.

I, on the other hand, never seem to remember sun block or covering up with SPF rated clothing until I am red and in pain.

You should pack sunscreen of an SPF of 30 or higher, and apply it often.

If you are like me, you should pack the aloe vera-based gel to soothe the pain because you forgot to apply sunscreen.

This brings us to another very common problem, and that is dehydration.

If you are hiking in a dry climate, or at high altitude (or in the case of Western Colorado, both), you can get dehydrated very quickly.

Learn the symptoms for yourself, and in others because

adventure this way. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

catching it early can save a life.

Signs of dehydration include dark-colored urine, an increased heart rate, an extremely dry mouth, and lethargy.

Any of these symptoms require pure water or an electrolyte drink, such as a sports drink. Avoid coffee and soda because of the caffeine, as it will make dehydration worse.

An injury that is always in the Top 5 is hypothermia.

This life-threatening condition occurs when the body temperature drops dangerously low. It can occur at 40 degrees or below, and the danger increases when the victim is wet, such as when caught unexpectedly in a rainstorm.

Symptoms include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, and slurred speech. If you notice any of these, immediately treat for hypothermia.

Get the victim to a warm place and remove all wet clothing. Warm the core of the person, chest, neck, head, and groin. Loosely cover the victim with blankets and administer warm, non-alcoholic drinks. Monitor for shock or the worsening of symptoms, and evacuate immediately if condition worsens.

The next three most commonly occurring injuries are sprains, broken bones and cuts.

Just about any activity you take part in anywhere in the world, you may encounter these three-day wrecking injuries, so preparation and training in this area seems to never be wasted.

A sprain occurs when a ligament is stretched too far or

is torn. With a sprain, there is always pain and swelling.

The standard treatment for a sprain is R.I.C.E. "R" is for rest. Keep off the sprained appendage as much as possible. "I" is for ice. You should ice the sprain to reduce swelling. "C" means you should compress the injured area. An Ace bandage comes in real handy here. "E" is for elevating the injured limb. This helps reduce the swelling and pain in the area.

Do not confuse a sprain with a broken bone or fracture.

You will notice a black and blue discoloration around the injured area. The pain will usually be very sharp and the victim will not be able to put any weight on the limb.

Yeah, it's broken.

If you have a broken leg or ankle, the most common amongst hikers and backpackers, wrap a splint around the leg and immobilize using duct tape, rope, or lengths of cloth.

A Sam's splint works well for immobilizing a limb; they weigh nothing and take up very little space.

Do not put any weight on the limb. If you have to move, use a crutch to support yourself.

In the event you see a bone protruding from the skin, this is an emergency compound fracture, and you should seek evacuation and medical attention immediately.

Any suspected broken bone patient who cannot be moved easily should be brought out by rescuers so as not to worsen the injuries.

In the outdoor world, it seems we all suffer from cuts and

scrapes. Most of these are not serious.

The important thing is to clean the wound and prevent infection. Wash the area with clean water and soap. I carry some iodine wipes with me to make sure I get the area clean. Throw a little Neosporin on the cut with a clean bandage and you should be good to go.

I had a puncture wound in South America once that I ignored because I did not think it was that serious. It became infected and almost ruined a two-week trip.

All of this could have been prevented if I would have just washed it out.

Most bleeding can be stopped with direct pressure onto the wound and elevation of the wound site above the heart.

Cover the wound with gauze, and if it gets saturated, add more gauze on top, but do not remove any existing gauze that is already in the wound — no peeking.

You can make a pressure bandage by placing lots of gauze over the wound and wrapping it tightly in place with an ace bandage or a bandana.

You don't want to cut off circulation. The patient should have no tingles or loss of feeling in the extremities.

If the blood loss cannot be stopped with direct pressure, a tourniquet should be administered. Tourniquets are used for life-threatening injuries with spurting or pulsating blood, and the blood is a very bright red color.

There are many types of tour-

niquets available. I personally carry a SWAT-T and a CAT7 with me.

The proper tourniquet is the one you correctly know how to administer. I cannot give proper instruction for this in these pages, but strongly suggest all of you take classes to learn how to stop bleeding.

Montrose Memorial Hospital and the "Stop The Bleed" program is a very good place to start.

Stopping emergency bleeding is an important skill for self-rescue.

The possibility of you being by yourself and sustaining a life-threatening cut is real. Practice self-rescue in this area as part of your training. Remember, you may only have seconds to control the bleeding before passing out.

I never head out into the woods looking to get injured, but it seems to turn out that way more often than I care to admit.

Getting some good first aid training is important. The life you save just might be your own.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse.

For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@icloud.com.