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## **Guidelines for Big Backyard Nature Walks**

Nature walks provide the opportunity for children to enjoy fresh air and exercise, and to learn about the natural world. You can help your child enjoy the outdoors safely by teaching them some of the basic health protection measure outlined below.

If you have any specific questions about children's health and the environment, contact the Lexington Health Department.

### **Wear Sun Protection**

Protect children from the sun's rays with sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher), clothing and hats.

### **Keep the Bugs Away**

Mosquitoes and ticks can carry diseases such as west Nile virus and Lyme disease. While these diseases are not a common problem in Lexington, you can help to protect your child from tick- and mosquito-borne diseases with simple prevention measures. . To keep insects and ticks away, apply an insect repellent containing 15% DEET to your child before s/he leaves home.

Bees, wasps and related insects may cause allergic reactions. Talk to your doctor and school nurse about Epi-pens if your child has any known allergies to insect bites.

People typically pick up ticks, both the tiny deer tick and larger dog ticks, by walking through brush or long grasses. Ask children to wear light colored long sleeves and pants when walking in woods and fields (tuck pants into socks). In addition to the basic precautions described above, check your child each evening for ticks. For more information see: [www.cdc.gov/health/default/htm](http://www.cdc.gov/health/default/htm)

### **Watch out for Water**

Children enjoy exploring streams and ponds. In most cases, the water in these areas will be safe. However, most bodies of water are not tested regularly (except swimming areas). Instruct children to wash hands carefully before eating to prevent illness from contaminated water.

### **Learn How to Identify Hazardous Plants**

Help your child avoid rashes by teaching him/her to identify poison ivy, stinging nettle and other plant species that might be hazardous.