

PREPARING FOR A HEALTHY TREK

Dear Trekkers and Parents:

We learned on our last pioneer trek that some medical problems are quite common. However, most can be prevented, or treated early enough to keep them from becoming serious. **PLEASE READ ALL OF THE INFORMATION (2 pages).** Before Trek, a parent and the trek participant will be required to sign a similar form. Trekkers will be expected to take responsibility for preventing/seeking help early for any problems that occur. **If you have any questions, contact Jenny Budd at (801) 450-4046.** Thanks!

Note: Any medications you bring need to be in original RX/Over-the counter medication containers.

THE 8 MOST COMMON MEDICAL PROBLEMS ON TREK:

1. BLISTERS, BLISTERS, and more BLISTERS

- There are things you can do to prevent blisters. **Please make sure you have a good pair of athletic-type shoes that are broken in but not worn out.** New shoes WILL cause blisters. We will be walking a LOT. Vans/converse type shoes are not great shoes for trek. You will have more problems with blisters and sore/tired feet. If you do not have shoes that will work, you do not need to spend a lot of money to get some. Payless and other stores have inexpensive athletic-type shoes that will work well. Make sure to get them several months in advance, and wear them often so that they are worn-in, and comfortable.
- Wearing a thin pair of “inner” socks (like nylon knee-high, or other thin, man-made fiber), under thicker, “moisture-wicking” (no cotton) socks will reduce friction. These socks can be found at WalMart, and many other stores. They are not expensive. Look for “moisture-wicking” and **no cotton** in the fiber content.
- If you feel a “hot spot” forming on your foot (an area that is painful as you are walking), STOP, and treat it before it becomes a blister. Wash the area with a baby wipe if possible, and let it dry. Cut a piece of moleskin in the shape of a donut and place it on your foot with the hole over the red area or blister. If your foot/shoe is damp, the moleskin will NOT stay on. You will need to duct tape over the area to hold the moleskin in place, and protect your skin from further damage. If you always seem to get blisters when you walk a lot, even in broken-in shoes, you may want to duct tape the area BEFORE you even get a hot spot. This will often prevent the problem entirely.
- If you get a blister anyway, and you think it will break with continued walking, sterilize a pin in the flame of a match or with rubbing alcohol. Prick the blister ONCE near the edge, and press out the liquid. Wash the area well, or clean with a baby wipe. Let it dry, then apply moleskin and duct tape if needed.
- **Please try to keep your shoes dry.** It may seem fun to run through the streams with your shoes on, but you are almost guaranteed blisters with wet shoes. We learned this lesson the hard way! If you need to walk through water, stop and take your shoes and socks off before walking through the water. Then clean your feet, let them dry, and put your DRY shoes and socks back on. Dry feet are much happier feet!

2. Dehydration/Heat Exhaustion

- Did you know that if you're thirsty, you're already partially dehydrated? **On the pioneer trek, you need to drink to PREVENT thirst, not to quench thirst. EVEN IF YOU DON'T LIKE WATER.** There is no way we can possibly emphasize this point enough. Even if temperatures are cool, your body will be using a lot of energy (and fluid) that must be replaced to keep you healthy and feeling well. **You should drink at least 64 oz of water a day, more if it is hot.** Measure the amount your water bottle holds, so you will know how many bottles you need to drink a day.
- Symptoms of dehydration include: headache, nausea/vomiting, dizziness, and not feeling well.
- **If it is hot outside, the need for water intake increases even more.** If you do not drink enough, you will be at risk for heat exhaustion, with symptoms like being pale and cool to the touch, weak pulse, and confusion/decreased level of consciousness. This is serious! Please do **NOT** allow yourself to become this sick. **You can prevent it!** If you are not feeling well, PLEASE tell your Ma/Pa or a medical person immediately.

3. Heat Stroke

- **This is a life-threatening emergency!** It is caused by exposure to the sun, heavy exertion, and not staying well-hydrated.
- Symptoms include: Red, very hot face, usually dry. Sometimes the person will still be sweating if they are working hard. Rapid, strong pulse. Confusion, decreased level of consciousness, or passing out.
- If you notice someone with these symptoms, notify a medical person immediately!

4. Hypothermia

- It seems strange that people might suffer from heat stroke/exhaustion and hypothermia on the same trek, **but it can and does happen!** Because we will be in the mountains of Wyoming, and our trek is in June, the temperatures at night can become VERY cold (under 25 degrees).
- **PLEASE** pay close attention to the clothing and supplies list given to you. **You MUST have a WARM sleeping bag** (look at the bag's temperature rating!)....not the type made to sleep indoors. We had trekkers last time who brought only a light hoodie, and an indoor-type sleeping bag. They were very, very cold, especially the night we had ice on our tents. **It is CRITICAL that you bring a warm COAT**, AND a hoodie/ jacket, AND a rain poncho. If you can stay dry, you will be much warmer. **You MUST have a sleeping pad**. Icy ground will literally be freezing to sleep on. You need insulation between you and the ground.
- Symptoms of hypothermia include: fatigue and irritability, violent/uncontrollable shivering, inability to think clearly, stumbling/falling. If you, or someone around you is having these symptoms, tell a medical person immediately.

5. Allergy and Asthma Attacks

- **If you have ever had allergies, or been diagnosed with asthma**, it is critical that you bring any medications (including inhalers and epi pens) you have to treat the condition. Even if you have not had any symptoms for a long time! We will be out in sage brush, dust, pollen, weeds, etc. You may have problems that you do not have at home.
- **We will NOT supply inhalers for trekkers! You MUST bring your own.** Be sure to include allergies and asthma (even in the past) on your medical form, so that the medical people on the trek will be aware and prepared to help you if a problem arises.

6. Sunburn

- Even though temperatures may be cool, we will be at a higher elevation, and sunburn is a real problem.
- **Bring sunscreen, and USE IT! Bring sunscreen lip balm** (with a 45 SPF rating – the higher the better), **and USE IT!** **You are bringing a hat or bonnet, WEAR IT!** Trek is so much more fun if you are not sunburned!

7. Chafing

- **OUCH!** This is very, very painful.....and if you have chafing in the first couple of miles, it is going to be a long 4 days! Prevent it! There are several ways. Loose-fitting pantaloons for the girls, and loose-fitting pants for the boys really help, but if the seams are still irritating to your skin, think about wearing “spandex” or something similar under your pantaloons or pants.
- “Friction sticks” are used by runners to prevent chafing, and can be purchased at many stores.
- Gold Bond Powder is great to prevent chafing.
- The most common area for chafing is the inner thighs.
- Cleaning sensitive areas with baby wipes each morning before getting out of your sleeping bag can prevent a lot of discomfort. If you're used to showering every day, and then work hard pushing/pulling handcarts in the wind and dust, a baby wipe “bed-bath” can go a long way to keeping you clean and comfortable.

8. Eye problems

- Think wind and dust. If you usually wear contacts, consider bringing glasses instead. Blowing dust and contacts are not a good mix. If something does get in your eye, go talk to a medical person.
- If you get red, itchy eyes with allergies, consider bringing some over-the-counter allergy eye drops.