

Keeping **HEALTHY** outdoors

A visit to New Zealand's great outdoors will take you close to nature in some of the last unspoilt places on earth.

But whether you are planning to have a picnic or to go walking or camping, there are a few simple things to remember – things that will help to make your trip safe and enjoyable, and protect the area for other people to enjoy in the future.

Poisonous plants

The flowers, berries and leaves of many native plants are attractive to children. But some of these plants may be poisonous when they are touched, chewed or swallowed. Teach children not to eat plants, berries, roots or flowers, and to spit out anything that feels as though it is "burning" their mouth.



Make sure the water is safe

The water in some lakes, rivers and streams may carry parasites and bacteria such as giardia, campylobacter and cryptosporidium which cause diarrhoea. These are spread by animals, birds and humans through their faeces.

You will need to make sure that the water you drink and use for washing is safe. This can be done in three ways:

- Boil the water for 1 minute. Use a portable gas stove. You may use a fireplace if suitable.
- Add iodine or chlorine bleach to the water. You can get these products from a pharmacy. Follow manufacturer's instructions if using water purifying tablets.
- Filter the water through an approved filter (Standard AS/NZ5438:1995). You can get the filters from shops that sell camping or outdoor equipment.



Bury toilet waste

Use public toilets when you can. But when you're away from places where there are public toilets, you must bury your toilet waste.



So plan ahead. Take a trowel and toilet paper with you. Make sure that children know what to do and where to go. Find a private area at least 50 metres away from water, walking tracks, huts and campsites. Dig or scrape a shallow hole about 10-15cm deep. Bury the waste and cover the hole with loose soil. Disposable nappies should not be buried. Put in rubbish bins or take home with you. Camper van effluent should be emptied at designated dump stations.

Do not wash your hands directly in water such as streams or lakes. Collect water in a container, wash your hands in it and drain the water into the ground away from the water source.

Protect yourself from the sun

Sunburn and skin damage is caused by the sun and it can lead to skin cancer. This is especially important if you are swimming or near water as the sun's rays are

reflected onto you. So everyone needs to cover-up, especially your children.

To cover up you can:

- Use plenty of sunscreen (SPF 15+) before you go out into the sun. Look at the instructions to find out how many hours it will protect you, and put it on again as often as required.
- Wear clothes that will protect your skin. Some shirts and tee-shirts are not much help, especially when they are wet.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses.
- Stay in the shade under trees or a sun umbrella.
- Take these precautions especially between 11am and 4pm.



Take care with food

It can be difficult to store food safely when you're camping or having a picnic. Food will spoil quickly if it gets warm, and eating it can make you sick. Food will also attract pests such as wasps, mice and rats.

To keep food safe you can:

- Put the food in containers that can't be opened or broken by pests.
- Store the food in a cool, shady place. You could use a chilly bin or put the food in a pillowcase and hang it from a tree.
- Wash your hands in safe water before and after handling food. Make sure children do this too.
- Make sure you use safe water to wash vegetables and fruit, or to wash dishes and containers.
- Cook food thoroughly and eat it right away. Cook only enough for each meal and don't save leftovers.
- Wash dishes right away and keep the clean ones covered.
- For longer trips take non-perishable food.

Remove your rubbish

Put your rubbish in strong rubbish bags and tie them carefully. If there are rubbish bins around, place the bags there. If there are no bins, take the rubbish with you when you leave.



Keep the pests away

Insects, rats and mice can be a nuisance when you are having a picnic, and when you're camping or walking in the outdoors. To keep pests away you need to:

- Bury toilet waste.
- Store your rubbish in strong bags and tie them tightly. Remove your rubbish as soon as you can.
- Use fly spray or screens.
- Wear trousers and shirts with long sleeves if there are mosquitoes or sandflies.
- Use an insect repellent on parts of your body that are not covered by your clothing. But be careful using repellents with young children.



For further information look for the New Zealand Water Care Code and the New Zealand Environment Care Code on the Department of Conservation website www.doc.govt.nz/explore/index.asp

Being outdoors in New Zealand is a great experience.

Following these guidelines will help make it more enjoyable.



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