

# Thrive Toolkit:

## *Summer* **OUTDOOR Health & Safety**



Your guide to safe, energizing, community building adventures all season long.

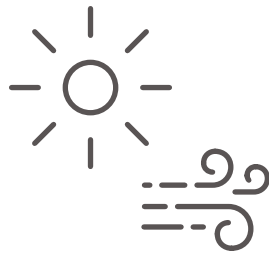
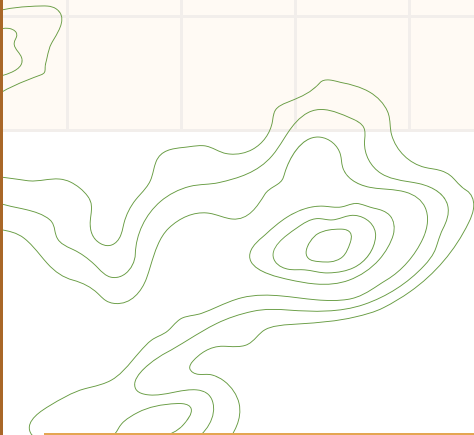
Summer in Oklahoma brings long days, warm evenings and countless opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Whether you're walking a neighborhood trail, relaxing at a park, or spending time near the water, outdoor activities offer powerful benefits for your physical, mental and social well being. This toolkit explores how to enjoy the season safely, protect yourself from common hazards and make the most of the health advantages that come with being outside.



# The health benefits of being outdoors

Spending time outside is one of the most effective ways to support whole body wellness. Natural light helps regulate your sleep cycle, fresh air boosts energy and green spaces reduce stress and improve mood. Outdoor movement also encourages more consistent physical activity, which supports heart health, strengthens muscles and improves mental clarity. Even short periods outdoors — like a 10 minute walk or a few minutes in the sun — can lift your mood and help you feel more grounded.

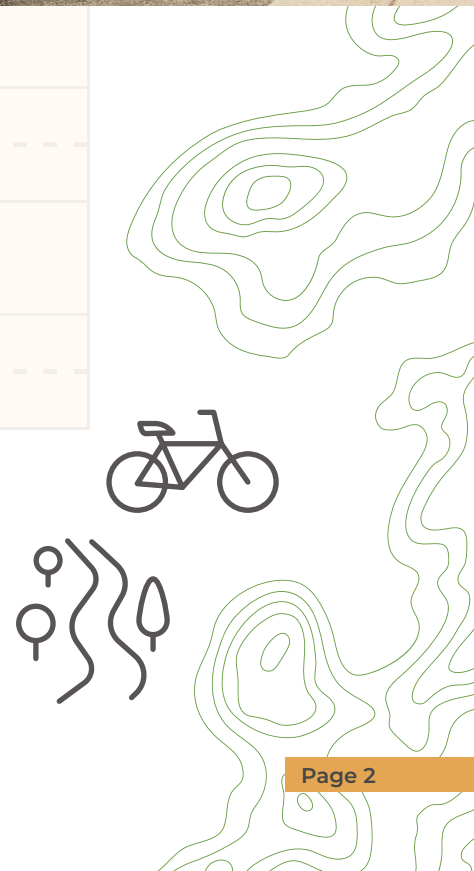
Being outdoors also increases opportunities for **social connection**, which is a major protective factor for mental and physical health. Sharing activities with others builds community, reduces loneliness and increases motivation to stay active.



## Summer activities in OKC

Oklahoma offers endless ways to get active outdoors, such as boating, hiking, bike riding, disc golf and plenty more.

Each activity brings unique benefits — from cardiovascular fitness to stress relief — but also requires thoughtful safety planning. Let's dive into various areas that we could focus on for our safety.



# Water safety: Protecting yourself around lakes, rivers and pools

Water is a major part of summer fun, but it also requires awareness and preparation. Natural water environments can be unpredictable, and drowning can happen quickly and quietly. Practicing water safety helps prevent accidents and keeps everyone confident and comfortable.



## Key water safety reminders:

- Learn basic water competency (floating, treading and swimming short distances).
- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket when boating or swimming in open water.
- Supervise children closely — stay within arm’s reach.
- Avoid alcohol when swimming or supervising swimmers.
- Check weather, water conditions and posted advisories before entering.
- Know what to do in an emergency: Call for help, assist safely and administer CPR.



## Wildlife awareness: Snakes in Oklahoma



Oklahoma experiences **twice the national average** of snakebites, especially during warm months. Most bites occur when people accidentally step on or disturb snakes. Awareness and prevention are key.

## Stay safe by:

- Staying on marked trails and open paths.
- Watching where you place your hands and feet.
- Avoiding tall grass, brush and rock piles.
- Giving snakes space — never try to handle or kill them.
- Wearing closed toe shoes in natural areas.

If bitten, remain calm, keep the limb still and seek emergency medical care immediately.



## General outdoor safety

Oklahoma summers bring heat, sun and rapidly changing weather. Preparing helps you stay safe and enjoy your time outside.

## Outdoor safety basics:

- Hydrate before, during and after activity.
- Wear sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) and reapply every two hours.
- Choose light, breathable clothing and a hat.
- Take breaks in shaded areas.
- Avoid peak heat hours (2 p.m. to 6 p.m.) when possible
- Check weather alerts before heading out.
- Carry a small first aid kit and a charged phone.



## Think Before You TREK: Smart planning for any outdoor adventure

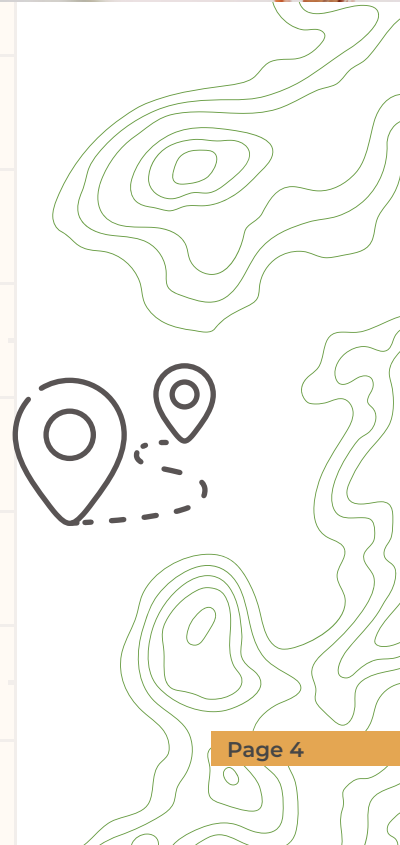
Whether you're walking a local trail or exploring a state park, planning reduces risk and increases enjoyment. The TREK framework helps you prepare for safe outdoor experiences:

**Take enough water, food, equipment and first-aid supplies.**

**Register your trip.**

**Emergency Personal Locator Beacon (PLB)**

**Keep to your planned route.**



# The Power of group activities

Outdoor activities are safer and more enjoyable when shared with others. Being active with a group provides:

- Increased safety through shared awareness.
- Motivation and accountability.
- Emotional support and reduced loneliness.
- A sense of belonging and community.
- Opportunities to learn new skills and explore new places.



Connection is a health asset — and summer is the perfect time to strengthen it.

## Summer safety checklist:

Use this checklist to stay prepared and confident outdoors:

- Hydrate consistently.
- Wear sunscreen and protective clothing.
- Use life jackets near open water.
- Stay aware of wildlife.
- Check weather conditions.
- Tell someone your plans.
- Bring first aid and emergency supplies.
- Stay with a group when possible.
- Pace yourself in the heat.

