

## Ask the Expert: Benefits of the Outdoors

Written by Devyani Agarwal, Purdue University Psychology 2022

During this time of uncertainty, it is more important than ever to prioritize one's health. Taking care of yourself can help you feel calm and in-control, especially when other parts of daily life are different. One of the best ways to self-care is to spend time outside. Spending time outside improves state-of-mind, mental health, and physical health. Here are a few of the ways spending time outside are important to health.



Being outside allows you to observe the natural world, which can make you feel relaxed. Evidence from studies show that being outdoors, surrounded by nature, makes people feel more positive. Getting some sun will also allow your body to make Vitamin D, an important nutrient for everyone and one that most Americans don't get enough of.

Being physically active outside can help you stay healthy in the long and short term. Exercising outside often feels easier because the sights, smells, and noises of nature take attention away from the strain of physical activity and allow you to exercise harder than you may inside.

Other benefits to spending time outside are:

- Improves circulation
- Lowers stress
- Improves mood
- Improves self-esteem
- Lowers blood pressure



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## Food Safety: Eating Outdoors

Written by Natalie Galvan Purdue University Nutrition and Dietetics 2023

**Avoid the temperature danger zone:** The temperature range for food between 40F and 140F is known as the “danger zone”, because bacteria can grow when left at these temperatures for too long and make you sick. Use a thermometer to ensure your food is cooked safely. Hot dogs, poultry, and leftover foods need to reach an internal temperature of 165F, to make sure harmful bacteria is killed. Other raw ground meats such as pork and beef need to reach an internal temperature of 160F.



**Keep perishable foods cold:** Chilled foods can be left unrefrigerated for a maximum of 2 hours (or 1 hour in hot weather above 90F). Consider packing perishable food with ice packs or frozen drinks. Then you’ll have some cool beverages as well!

**Consume safe water:** Bring bottled water or use a purified water source if it is available.

**Clean, scrub, and sanitize:** Proper sanitation is important to keep bacteria and viruses away from food. Hands, cooking utensils, and surfaces should be cleaned before and after cooking. Wash your hands throughout the cooking process and every time you switch from one task to another.

## Customizable Cereal Trail Mix

### Ingredients (4 servings)

- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup whole almonds
- 2 cups Cheerios

### Directions

1. Toss ingredients together and serve.

This is a great snack to take on the go that your whole family can enjoy!

### Other healthy additions

- Shredded coconut
- Bran cereal
- Chocolate chips



### Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 383

Protein: 9 grams

Carbs: 51 grams

Sources: <https://www.superhealthykids.com/recipes/cereal-trail-mix/>, <https://ak8picdn.net/shutterstock/videos/1321090/thumb/6.jpg>, <https://www.eatright.org/homefoodsafety/safety-tips/outdoor-dining/hiking-and-camping-with-food-safety-in-mind>

# Eating Right: 5 Tips for Dining Outdoors

Written by Caroline Parker, Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health '21

Eating outside can be a fun family outing or just a chance to get some fresh air. Finding a picnic table at the park, sitting on a blanket in the grass, or going on a hike are all great activities. Following these tips can help make the experience safe and enjoyable for the whole family.

## 1. Have a plan.

Think about what beverages and food you will need to bring, what eating utensils or tools you will need, and if taking a cooler is an option.



## 2. It's essential to stay hydrated.

It is a good rule of thumb to drink 2 cups of fluid for every hour spent in the outdoors when it's hot. Make sure you bring or can access plenty of clean drinking water.

## 3. For a hike or day trip...

Make sure you have a cold source, such as an ice pack to keep foods properly chilled below 40°F. Choose foods that are light, portable, and healthy to keep your load light, good choices are:

- trail mix, nuts and seeds, fresh whole fruit, energy bars, whole-grain tortillas, dried jerky.

## 4. For camping or multi-day trips...

It is harder to pack food for several days at a time, but a little planning can help. The first day you will be able to eat perishable foods if you have a cooler, but after that, map out your meals so you will have what you need. Here are some ideas:

- Ready to eat cereal, whole fruits and vegetables, whole-grain pasta, rice mix
- To minimize trash, pack foods that don't require a lot of packaging

## 5. Don't forget proper food safety practices!

Always allow good food safety practices - from packing to plating.

Reference the Food Safety section of this newsletter for more tips!

Bring these food safety essentials:

- Bowls, plates, kettle, or cooking pot
- Eating and cooking utensils
- Can opener and ice packs
- Trash bags
- Portable water filters
- Thermometers for the cooler and cooked meat





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Purdue University  
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Website: [www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/](http://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/)

This newsletter is edited by Caroline Parker and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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## In The News: Indiana's State Parks

IN THE NEWS

Written by Alexis Noirot, Purdue University Developmental Family Sciences 2022

### Turkey Run State Park

Nestled in the sandstone gorges of southwestern Indiana, this park provides 2,382 acres of opportunity to explore. Turkey Run has 11 trails and several horseback riding trails. The clear running Sugar Creek flows through the center of Turkey Run and is one of the most popular canoe streams in the state.

This park also hosts activities such as fishing, swimming, sand volleyball, and even has a planetarium. The park is open from 7AM to 11PM everyday, but the trails are only open from dawn to dusk. Turkey Run State Park's visitors are welcomed year round, displaying some of the most beautiful sights that Indiana has to offer.



### McCormick's Creek State Park

This park is located in Spencer, Indiana and features more than 10 miles of hiking trails. In addition to hiking, there are places for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, swimming and horseback riding. Trail 3 features multiple waterfalls that descend into a beautiful cascading reflection pool.

The park's gates are open from 7AM to 11PM everyday. To see some of Indiana's finest waterfalls and vast geology, McCormick's creek is the ideal place!

