

YOUR HEALTH



Dealing With Animal Bites

An animal bite can be both painful and dangerous, depending upon the situation. If you or someone you're with is bitten by an animal, it is crucial to assess the situation within the first few minutes to determine if medical treatment is necessary.

If out in nature, this can obviously be a more difficult task. Bites from snakes or bats, for example can be more alarming than a bite from a domestic animal. Every situation is unique, so always have a first-aid kit handy, and use your common sense to guide your decisions on seeking medical assistance.

COMMON BITES

Domestic pets cause most animal bites to humans, with dogs more likely to bite than cats, according to the Mayo Clinic. Cat bites, however, are more likely to cause infection because they are usually puncture wounds and can't be thoroughly cleaned, the Mayo Clinic states. The issue with bites from non-immunized domestic animals, rabbits, squirrels and other rodents is rabies. An immediate trip to the doctor is crucial in these situations.

WHAT TO DO

- **Minor wounds:** Wash the wound as thoroughly as possible with soap and water. Also apply an antibiotic cream and a clean bandage to protect the wound from infection.

- **Deep wounds:** Stop the

bleeding by applying pressure with a clean, dry cloth. Depending upon your location and severity of the wound, you should either be driven to your local health care professional or call 9-1-1 for emergency situations.

- **For infection:** Swelling,

redness, increased pain and oozing – these are all signs of infection and should be checked by your doctor immediately.

TETANUS SHOTS

The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention recommends getting a tetanus shot every 10 years. In the case of a deep or dirty bite wound, your doctor may suggest a booster, especially if your last tetanus shot was more than five years ago. The CDC also recommends that

children or adults exposed to bats, or who are sleeping and discover bats present, seek medical advice. Even if you don't think you've been bitten, it is important to be checked out because bat bite marks can be very difficult to spot.



Don't Cheat Your Feet

Most Americans log 75,000 miles on their feet by the time they reach age 50, according to the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA).

And much like you would maintain the tires of a car with that many miles, it is crucial to keep up on the general health of your feet. Regular foot care can lead to prevention, detection, intervention and treatment of foot and ankle problems, which can be downright debilitating to everyday life.

GENERAL INJURIES AND CONDITIONS

Each foot has 33 joints that can be affected with arthritis, says the APMA. Fluid buildup in the joints couples with inflammation and swelling of the cartilage and lining of the joints to cause arthritis. Other common foot issues include sprains, strains and fractures. A sprain is a soft tissue injury, while a fracture is an actual break in the bone. People who are on their feet for extended periods of time for work or athletics may be more susceptible to both gradual conditions and sudden injuries that may require rest, surgery or both.

SHOE INSERTS

Shoe inserts, both pre-packaged and

custom-fit, can be very helpful additions to your foot-care strategy. They cushion your feet, provide lasting comfort and support your arches. The most common types of inserts are heel liners, arch supports, insoles or foot cushions. While helpful in mitigating less serious foot aches and pains, the APMA does not recommend inserts for correcting biomechanical or long-standing foot issues.

FOOT HEALTH TIPS

Foot care should be a part of your everyday routine. Half of all Americans report experiencing foot pain at some point in their lives, according to an APMA study. The organization recommends a bevy of foot-care tactics in an effort to reduce this substantial number.

- Moisturize feet daily to help avoid dry, cracked and irritated skin.
- Stretch and exercise your feet and toes to avoid muscle cramps.
- Raise your legs often to reduce swelling caused by sitting too long in one position.
- Wear the right kind of shoes for optimum comfort, support and padding.



Teen Mental Health

The teenage years can be a tough transition – for both parents and children. Physical, mental and emotional changes come on quickly during the teenage years.

Throw in the pressures from friends to fit in, from teachers to perform and from parents to live up to their expectations, and being a teen is no easy task.

Parents play a vital role in ensuring smooth transitions, both entering, during and exiting the teenage years. And according to the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), communication is the greatest tool that parents have at their disposal.

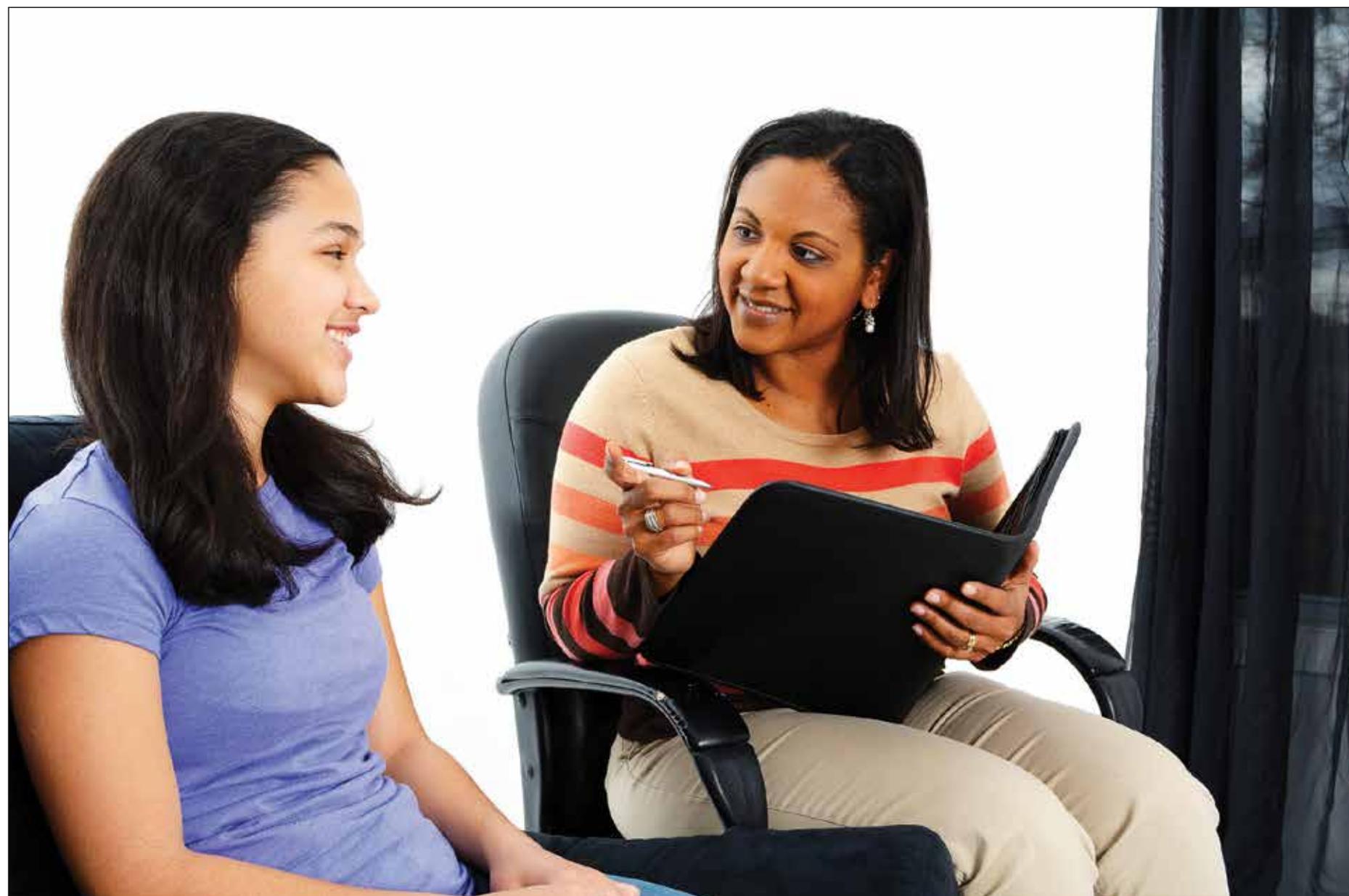
WARNING SIGNS

Teens are at risk for a multitude of self-destructive behaviors, according to the AAFP, and there are certain signs that may signal that your child is having an issue:

- Agitated behavior.
- Rapid weight loss or gain.
- Drop in school grades.
- Lack of motivation or empathy.
- Fatigue or loss of energy.
- Low self-esteem.
- Trouble falling and staying asleep.

COMMUNICATION IS BEST

Take any of the aforementioned warning signs seriously. Ignoring them can only accelerate a negative behavior, and it is easier to deal with problems before they



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spiral out of control. Talking through a potential issue can help you and your teen discover what may be sparking his or her decisions. Be understanding of what your teen is going through and simply listen, stay positive

and help your child feel good about him or herself. The AAFP reminds parents that teens are reactionary by nature and decide how they feel about themselves in large part by how their parents react to them.

HELP

The AAFP urges you to reach out to your family doctor if you are concerned about any potential warning signs from your teen. There are also numerous national hotlines for information, reference

and advice, including:

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (202-966-7300).
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (888-NIH-NIDA).
- National Institute of Mental Health (800-421-4211).

Training Tips for a 5K

By now you've likely seen a 5K race pop up in your neck of the woods. Often created as a fundraiser, 5Ks are a great way to support a local cause while getting into shape at the same time.

The distance of a 5K – 3.1 miles (5 kilometers) – is challenging but manageable for new runners, and can also generally be walked in under an hour. The courses are also usually set to a backdrop of beautiful scenery like cityscapes or wooded areas so you can enjoy your workout while taking in some stunning sights.

TRAINING SCHEDULE

How you train for a 5K is dependent upon your running expertise. Do you already run regularly? Can you comfortably run one mile? Two? Let your answers to these questions guide your training regimen. For beginners, training should start a couple of months in advance. Start by mixing in running and walking for 30-minute intervals every day. Once you build your endurance to handle one mile, add a second mile to your routine and so on. The goal is to make 3.1 miles a consistently attainable goal without the threat of injury or overexertion.

TRACK YOUR WORKOUTS

There are a few tactics you can use to stay motivated and



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track your progress during your runs. Put together a playlist of your favorite songs on your phone or mp3 player. You can use certain songs as a reference point to let you know when you've hit those first and second mile marks. Using a GPS-powered run

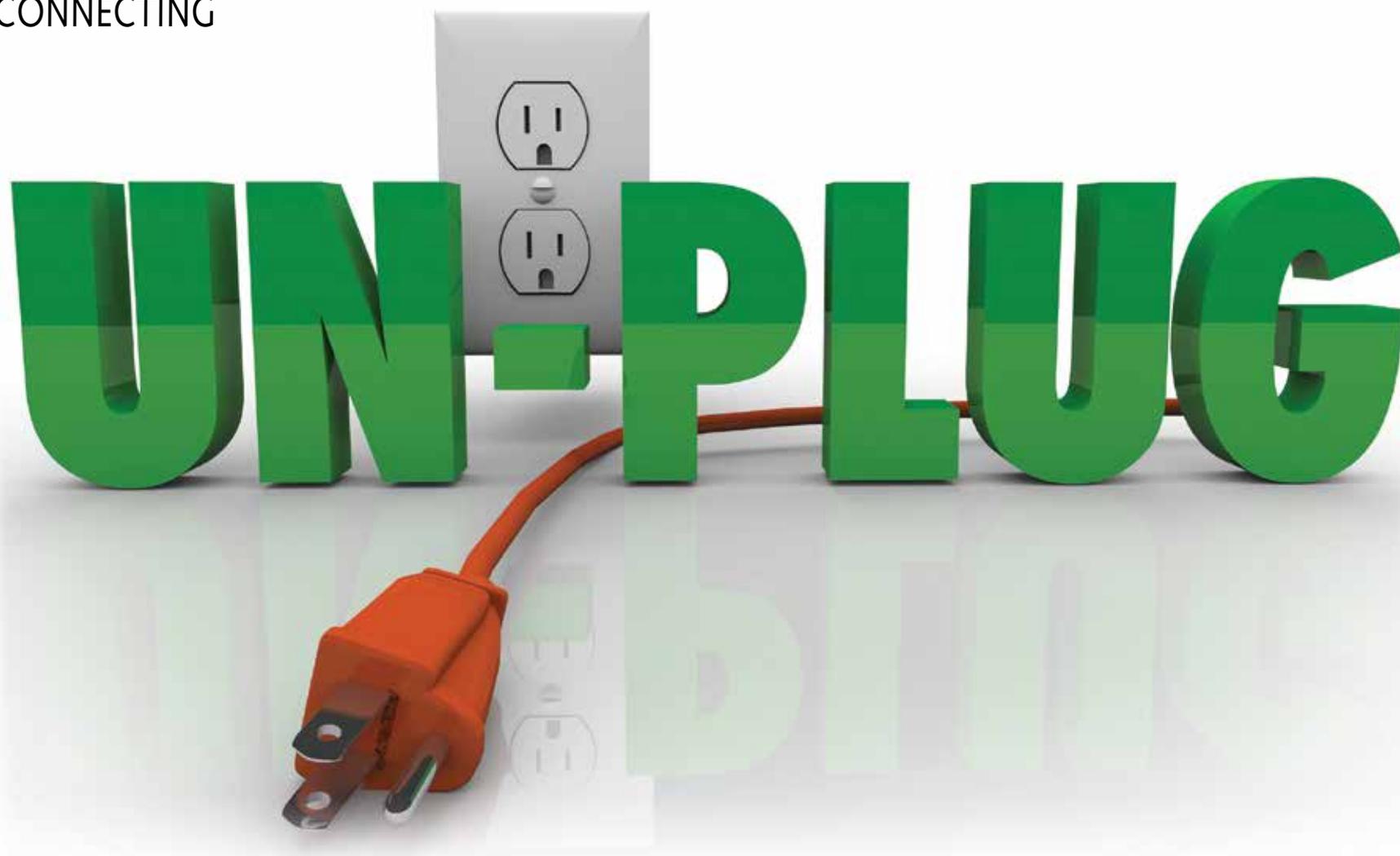
tracker on your smart phone is also a great way to monitor your time, distance and calories burned. Many free apps are available for this purpose.

DURING THE RUN

As with any competitive sporting event, you will likely

be dealing with a bit of adrenaline as you wait for the 5K start gun to fire. Remember your training. You are simply translating all of your hard work onto the 5K course. If you listen to a certain playlist during your training, don't change it up for the big race. If you stick to a

specific stretching routine before you run, do it the same way on race day. And don't forget to take a minute during your 5K run to slow down and realize all of the good you are doing both for your body and the charitable cause you are helping.



Turning Off Technology

Sometimes it's best to slow life down a bit. And with the powerful impact of technology on our daily lives, that can mean turning off and tuning out from our devices.

A one-day – or even one-hour – purge from our smartphones, tablets, laptops and flat-screens can help restore our connection with the people and places around us. And that can have lasting positive effects on our health, according to multiple studies, including one by the National Sleep Foundation that found too much technology may interfere with healthy sleeping patterns.

SET SOME LIMITS

Track how many times you check your email, Facebook account or Twitter feed each day. Also track how many times you have a meaningful conversation with your spouse, family member or friend. Write down the total numbers, compare

them and prepare to be amazed. Is the technology-related number double the meaningful conversation one? Triple? It may be time to set limits on your technology use. You can choose to check email only after a certain time in the morning or only after a certain time at night. Set your smartphone's do-not-disturb setting and handle all of your emails and messages at one time.

RECONNECT WITH NATURE

Getting reconnected with Mother Nature can be a great way of unplugging from your technology-filled life. Leave the tablet and laptop at home and head out on a camping trip. Or spend the afternoon hiking – without your favorite device attached to your finger-

tips. It is still a good idea to bring your phone along on camping or hiking trips in case of emergencies, but leave them in your backpack and reclaim your relationship with nature, friends and family members.

SOCIAL NETWORKING STRESS

A study by Utah Valley University found that too much time spent on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter can cause user envy and stress. People may see their friends or family members posting mainly positive messages and updates, and become jealous of their lives. This can be a potentially damaging reaction, especially for people who may be dealing with negative life issues, according to the study.

Importance of Washing Hands

Quick, when's the last time you washed your hands? Right before you picked up this section? Thirty minutes ago? Two hours ago? Gulp, six hours ago?

Maintaining clean hands is one of the most important deterrents to sickness and the spreading of harmful germs. Many diseases and conditions are attributed to people not washing their hands with running water and soap for the proper amount of time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a very specific method for washing hands, one that is backed by data from numerous studies and research projects. More on that below, but first check out some of the CDC's most striking numbers related to hand-washing.

- About 2.2 million children under the age of five die each year from diarrheal diseases and pneumonia. Hand-washing with soap could protect about one out of three young children who get sick with diarrhea and about one out of six young children with infections like pneumonia.

- Proper hand-washing could reduce respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by about 21 percent.

- It could also lead to a 58-percent reduction in the number of diarrheal illnesses in people with weakened immune systems.



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HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS

Wet: Use clean, running water to wet your hands. The CDC says temperature of the water does not appear to affect microbe removal.

Lather: Create friction by

lathering and scrubbing your hands together. And don't forget those fingernails. The highest concentration of microbes is generally present there, according to the CDC.

Scrub: Rub and scrub those hands together for at least 20 seconds – a time equivalent of

humming the “Happy Birthday” song twice from beginning to end.

Rinse: Soap and friction help lift the dirt, grime and germs from your hands, but rinsing sends them down the drain. Always use clean, running water to rinse, as using

standing water that has been contaminated through previous use can re-contaminate the hands.

Dry: The CDC says germs can be transferred more easily to and from wet hands, so drying your hands immediately after washing is crucial.