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## Walking - safety and environmental issues

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## Summary

- Check with Parks Victoria as to which reserves and parks are appropriate for your age and fitness level.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after your walk.
- While walking through Victorian parks and reserves, make sure you keep environmental damage to a minimum.

Walking is a low impact activity that offers many health benefits. It's good for your heart, joints, muscles and bones. It's free, requires no training or special equipment, and is generally a safe way to exercise. However, there are safety and environmental issues to consider, especially if you choose to walk in parks or reserves that offer difficult terrain or long trails.

## General safety suggestions

General suggestions on reducing the risk of injury while walking include:

- Wear appropriate footwear to reduce the risk of blisters or shin splints.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after your walk.
- Wear sunglasses, sunscreen, a long-sleeved shirt and a hat to avoid sunburn.
- Choose a route that is appropriate for your age and fitness level. Warm up and cool down with a slow, gentle pace to ease in and out of your exercise session.
- See your doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program, particularly if you are aged over 40 years, are overweight or haven't exercised in a long time.

## Don't overexert yourself

You don't have to push yourself to breathlessness to enjoy the health benefits of walking. Instead, walk briskly enough so that you can still carry on a conversation. You will need to increase the intensity of your walks as your cardiovascular fitness improves, by walking faster or choosing hillier terrain. You can give your upper body more of a workout by wearing weights strapped to your hands.

## Bushwalking safety suggestions

You may increase your risk of injury (such as shin splints or hypothermia) if you underestimate the demands of a particular bushwalk. Suggestions include:

- Check with Parks Victoria as to which parks and reserves are appropriate for your age and fitness level.
- Generally, about six hours for a bushwalk (including rest breaks) is more than enough for the average person.
- Remember that walking can be hard work on a child's little legs. Approximately 1km per birthday is a good rule of thumb. For example, a four year old can be expected to walk up to 4km, with plenty of rest breaks.
- Always tell someone of your estimated time of return, so they can raise the alarm if you don't turn up.
- It is best to have at least three companions while bushwalking.
- Make sure you have maps of the area. Take note of all signage. Stay on the path.
- Check the weather forecast and take appropriate safety measures (for example, pack correct clothing and take sufficient quantities of drink and food).
- Look out for hazards in alpine or coastal areas, such as cliff edges or large waves.

## Environmental considerations

While walking through parks and reserves, make sure you keep environmental damage to a minimum. Suggestions include:

- Stick to the paths. Wandering off the paths will damage vegetation, cause erosion and increase your chances of getting lost.
- If you plan to walk your dog in a park, check first to see if they are permitted. Many national and state parks and conservation reserves have dog restrictions.
- Most parks forbid domestic animals, firearms and chainsaws.
- A permit is required to remove rocks or plants from any park.
- Respect all native wildlife.
- Don't litter. Take all rubbish home with you.

**Always use a constructed fireplace** where provided, or light the fire in a 30-centimetre-deep trench with at least 3 metres cleared of flammable material around the campfire. **No fires at all may be lit on days of Total Fire Ban.** Gas or fuel stoves have less environmental impact and are preferred.

Fires are not permitted in some parks. If you would like more information about campfires, contact Parks Victoria on 13 1963, or visit [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au) or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226

## Where to get help

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**betterhealth.vic.gov.au**

- Your doctor
- Parks Victoria Information Centre Tel. 13 1963
- [VICSRAPID Victorian Sport and Recreation Association for Intellectual Disability](#) Tel. (03) 9639 3399
- [Bushwalking Victoria](#) Tel. (03) 9455 1876
- **VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226**

[References](#)

- Be safe - plan ahead [online], Parks Victoria. [More information here.](#)

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### Safety

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#### Safety basics

- [Bites and stings – first aid](#)  
[If you are bitten or stung by an insect or animal, apply first aid and seek medical treatment as soon as possible...](#)
- [How to survive a rip current \(video\)](#)  
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- [Ladder safety matters – Mick \(video\)](#)  
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- [Ladders Safety Matters - Paul \(video\)](#)  
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[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)
- [Babies and safety](#)  
[Most injuries to babies do not occur by chance - many are predictable and largely preventable...](#)
- [Baby care - moving from cot to bed](#)  
[Some children are unsettled the first few nights in a 'big bed'. Try to be patient, loving and reassuring...](#)
- [Baby furniture - safety tips](#)  
[Even if your baby furniture meets every safety standard and recommendation, your child still needs close supervision...](#)
- [Bicycle safety and children](#)  
[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety and become safer road and bicycle users...](#)

- [Burns and scalds - children](#)  
[Most hot tap water scald injuries to children happen in the bathroom...](#)
- [Child safety and injury prevention](#)  
[By making a few practical changes to your home, you can dramatically reduce the risk of injury to your child...](#)
- [Child safety in the car](#)  
[Taking care to restrain children correctly while travelling in a car is the best way to prevent injuries...](#)
- [Eating tips for young toddlers](#)  
[Children have a natural ability to sense when they are hungry and when they are full...](#)
- [Farm safety – children](#)  
[Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...](#)
- [Hot weather and child safety](#)  
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- [Internet safety for children](#)  
[A child's digital footprint can be as easy to follow as their real footprints...](#)
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[Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...](#)
- [Mobile phone safety for children](#)  
[Teach your child strategies for responding to mobile phone bullying...](#)
- [Playgrounds and child safety](#)  
[Play environments can be safe and beneficial for your child. With proper planning, you can make sure your child gets plenty of playtime activity...](#)
- [Poisoning and child safety](#)  
[Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately if you suspect your child has been poisoned or given the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine...](#)
- [Road and traffic safety for children](#)  
[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety, and become safer road users...](#)
- [Scooters and child safety](#)  
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[Toddlers are most at risk of drowning because they are mobile and curious but don't understand the danger of water...](#)

#### **Safety in and around the home**

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[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)
- [Asbestos in the home](#)  
[Asbestos fibres breathed into the lungs can cause a range of health problems including lung cancer and mesothelioma...](#)
- [Chemicals in the home](#)  
[Learn how to safely store and dispose of household chemicals, and how to respond when a person is poisoned...](#)
- [Electric shock](#)  
[Always disconnect the power supply before trying to help a victim of electric shock...](#)
- [Gas heating - health and safety issues](#)  
[If you service your gas heater regularly and use it correctly, it will be safe and economical to use...](#)
- [Greywater - recycling water at home](#)

[When handled properly, greywater can be safely reused for the garden...](#)

- [Groundwater](#)

[Groundwater quality varies across Victoria; in some areas, groundwater is not suitable for use...](#)

- [Ladder safety matters – Mick \(video\)](#)

[Stop and think before you use a ladder...](#)

- [Ladder safety matters – Nick \(video\)](#)

[Stop and think before you use a ladder...](#)

- [Ladder Safety – Mick's story](#)

[Injuries associated with ladder falls have been steadily increasing in Australia, especially among men aged 60 years and older doing work in and around the home...](#)

- [Ladder Safety – Nick's story](#)

[Injuries associated with ladder falls have been steadily increasing in Australia, especially among men aged 60 years and older doing work in and around the home...](#)

- [Ladder Safety – Paul's story](#)

[Paul was sanding the exterior of his house when he overreached and fell more than two metres from his ladder...](#)

- [Ladders Safety Matters - Paul \(video\)](#)

[We can keep our pools safe, healthy, and most importantly fun...](#)

- [Look after your health at harvest time \(slideshow\)](#)

[Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...](#)

- [Medicines - safety issues](#)

[Make sure your doctor knows about every medicine you take, including vitamins...](#)

- [Older people – preventing falls at home](#)

[Falls are a major cause of injury for older people. Find out how you can prevent falls around your home...](#)

- [Pest control in the home](#)

[If you use pesticides to control pests around the house, make sure you use as little as possible...](#)

- [Swimming pools - water quality](#)

[Check your swimming pool regularly to make sure the water is safe for swimming...](#)

- [Vision loss - safety around the home](#)

[There are many ways to improve home safety for people whose vision is deteriorating...](#)

- [Water quality in tanks, bores and dams](#)

[Make sure your private drinking water supply is safe...](#)

#### **Safe lifestyle and entertainment**

- [Internet safety for children](#)

[A child's digital footprint can be as easy to follow as their real footprints...](#)

- [Mobile phone safety for children](#)

[Teach your child strategies for responding to mobile phone bullying...](#)

- [Partying safely – tips for teenagers](#)

[Don't advertise a party via SMS or the internet to limit the risk of gate-crashers and violent situations...](#)

- [Solariums \(sunbeds and tanning beds\)](#)

[There is no such thing as a safe solarium tan...](#)

#### **Outdoor, weather and sports safety**

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[People aged 65 years and over are at increased risk of heat-related illnesses and need special care in hot weather...](#)
- [Heat stress – preventing heatstroke](#)  
[Heatstroke is a life-threatening emergency that can be avoided by following simple prevention measures...](#)
- [Hot weather and child safety](#)  
[Babies and children can quickly lose body fluids in hot weather, which can lead to dehydration...](#)
- [How to cope and stay safe in extreme heat](#)  
[Know the effects of extreme heat, who is at risk and how you can prepare yourself and others...](#)
- [How to survive a rip current \(video\)](#)  
[Learn what to do if you find yourself in a rip current...](#)
- [Hypothermia](#)  
[The early responses to hypothermia will be moving around, seeking shelter, hair standing on end \(goosebumps\) and shivering...](#)
- [Walking - safety and environmental issues](#)  
[Choose a route that is appropriate for your age and fitness level. Warm up and cool down with a slow, gentle pace to ease in and out of your exercise session...](#)
- [Water from natural resources](#)  
[Drinking untreated water, such as creek water, bore water and sometimes even rainwater can lead to illnesses including gastroenteritis...](#)
- [Water safety for children](#)  
[Toddlers are most at risk of drowning because they are mobile and curious but don't understand the danger of water...](#)

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- [Motor vehicle crashes](#)  
[Motor vehicle crashes continue to be one of the biggest killers and causes of injury in Victoria...](#)
- [Road and traffic safety for children](#)  
[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety, and become safer road users...](#)
- [Safe driving](#)  
[Safe driving is up to every individual on the road. You can be a safe driver by being alert and ready to take action at any time...](#)
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[Scooters can travel at fast speeds and falls and collisions are disturbingly common...](#)
- [Travel safety tips](#)  
[You can reduce your risk of being mugged or robbed while travelling by taking a few simple precautions...](#)

#### **Fire, flood and other disasters**

- [After a flood – animal and insect related hazards](#)



[When returning to a flood-affected area, remember that wild animals, including rats, mice, snakes or spiders, may be trapped in your home, shed or garden...](#)

- [After a flood – returning home safely](#)

[When returning to your home after a flood, take precautions to reduce the possibility of injury, illness or disease...](#)

- [Bushfire aftermath - safety tips](#)

[Houses, sheds and other buildings or structures burnt in a bushfire can leave potential health hazards...](#)

- [Bushfire preparation advice](#)

[Being prepared for a bushfire helps you cope better in an emergency...](#)

- [Bushfire smoke](#)

[Bushfire smoke can reduce air quality in rural and urban areas, and may affect people's health...](#)

- [Emergencies - floods](#)

[You and your family should work out an emergency plan in case of flood...](#)

- [Smoke from planned burns](#)

[Bushfire smoke can reduce air quality in rural and urban areas, and may affect people's health. Planned burns are an important part of reducing the risk of bushfires...](#)

- [Talking to children about bushfire risk](#)

[Children can be affected by information regarding bushfire risk and they may become concerned about issues of safety. Talking to children openly in a way that suits their age, while also involving...](#)

- [Urban flash floods - FAQs](#)

[Urban flash flooding can happen quickly and without warning. Heavy rain causes runoff to collect in dips, car parks and roads, and there is a risk of contamination, injury and disease...](#)

#### **Work and environmental safety**

- [Asbestos and your health](#)

[When asbestos fibres become airborne, people working with asbestos may inhale particles which remain in their lungs...](#)

- [Cadmium](#)

[Low-level exposure to cadmium over a long period of time may cause health effects because cadmium can accumulate in the body...](#)

- [Computer-related injuries](#)

[Using a computer can contribute to problems of the muscles and joints, eyestrain and overuse injuries of the arms, wrists and hands...](#)

- [Eye safety at work](#)

[Wearing eye protection appropriate for the task can significantly reduce the risk of injury...](#)

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[Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats...](#)

- [Shiftwork](#)

[A person working the night shift is at greater risk of various disorders and accidents...](#)

- [Skin cancer - protecting outdoor workers](#)

[People who work outdoors are in one of the highest risk groups for skin cancer...](#)

- [Workplace conflict](#)

[A clash of personalities at work is bad for business, because it can affect productivity and increase absenteeism...](#)

- [Workplace safety - confined spaces](#)

[Around 60 per cent of people killed in confined spaces were trying to rescue someone else...](#)

- [Workplace safety - coping with a critical incident](#)

[Stress responses can develop over time after trauma, and support may be required by some workers or groups...](#)

- [Workplace safety - dangerous goods](#)

[Dangerous goods are objects or substances that are potentially harmful to people or the environment, such as explosives or chemicals...](#)

- [Workplace safety - hazardous substances](#)

[A hazardous substance can be inhaled, splashed onto the skin or eyes, or swallowed...](#)

- [Workplace safety - infection control](#)

[The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing...](#)

- [Workplace safety - manual handling injuries](#)

[A person can be injured when handling objects in a variety of ways including pulling, pushing, holding or restraining...](#)

- [Workplace safety - noise pollution](#)

[There are many ways to reduce exposure to excessive noise in the workplace...](#)

- [Workplace safety - overuse injuries](#)

[Occupational overuse syndrome, also known as RSI, is caused by repetitive movements or awkward postures...](#)

#### **Farm safety**

- [Chemicals and spray drift](#)

[Sprayed chemicals can drift over neighbouring properties or water sources, and can affect human health, animals or the environment...](#)

- [Farm safety and handling agrichemicals](#)

[To reduce risks on the farm, use hazardous chemicals according to manufacturer guidelines or replace them with less dangerous options...](#)

- [Farm safety – children](#)

[Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...](#)

- [Farm safety - confined spaces](#)

[Any confined space on a farm can be dangerous and the threat may not be apparent until it's too late...](#)

- [Farm safety - crush injuries](#)

[Hand and finger injuries are the most common crush injuries that occur on Victorian farms...](#)

- [Farm safety - falls](#)

[Falls are a common farm hazard, especially for older farmers...](#)

- [Farm safety - handling animals](#)

[Any animal-handling practices can increase the risk of injury to farmers, farm workers and the animal...](#)

- [Farm safety - machinery](#)

[Poorly used or faulty machinery is a major cause of death and injury on farms...](#)

- [Farm safety - manual handling](#)

[Farm workers often experience muscle and ligament strain, but good manual handling techniques and safe work habits can prevent most injuries...](#)

- [Farm safety - quad bikes](#)

[Most injuries and deaths involving quad bikes \(all-terrain vehicles\) are caused by the bike rolling over the rider...](#)

- [Farm safety - risks and hazards](#)

[Farms can be dangerous places for workers and family members, but the risks can be reduced...](#)

- [Farm safety – sheep and shearing](#)

[Handling sheep can cause manual injuries and badly designed shearing sheds can present a range of hazards...](#)

- [Look after your health at harvest time \(slideshow\)](#)

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- [Heat stress – preventing heatstroke](#)

Heatstroke is a life-threatening emergency that can be avoided by following simple prevention measures...

- [Snow sports and cold-related injuries](#)

You can help reduce your risk of winter sports injuries with planning, preparation and proper equipment...

- [Chemicals and spray drift](#)

Sprayed chemicals can drift over neighbouring properties or water sources, and can affect human health, animals or the environment...

- [Sun protection in the snow](#)

Winter activities such as snow skiing or snowboarding pose a high risk of sunburn...

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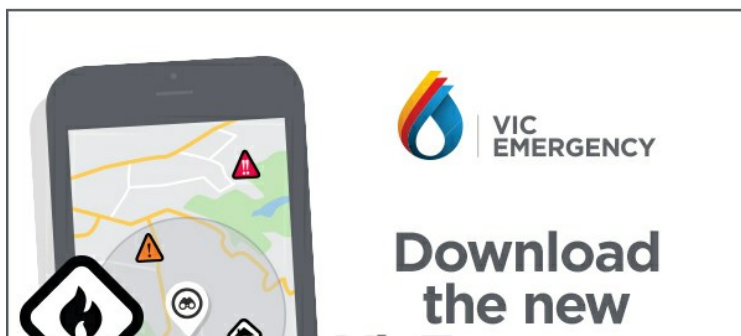
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### VicEmergency app

Download the VicEmergency app and set up a 'watch zone' for your location to receive advice and warnings about potential epidemic thunderstorm asthma events during the grass pollen season.

[Download the VicEmergency app](#)



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