

As the weather warms, avoid gardening's pitfalls

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U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers safety tips.

(HealthDay)—Exercise and fresh food are among the benefits of gardening, but there are also potential hazards that you can take steps to avoid, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

Proper clothing and safety gear is essential. Wear gloves to protect your hands from skin irritants, cuts and contaminants. Guard against ticks and mosquitoes by wearing a long-sleeved shirt and long pants tucked into your socks. High rubber boots are a good idea because ticks usually lurk close to the ground. Use an insect repellent with DEET, the CDC recommends.

When using [power tools](#) and equipment, wear safety goggles, hearing protection, sturdy shoes and long pants. Be sure the equipment is

working properly. Keep tools, equipment and harmful chemicals out of children's reach.

Protect yourself from the sun by wearing long sleeves, a wide-brimmed hat, sun glasses and sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.

Take steps to reduce your risk of heat-related illness. Be sure to drink plenty of water and take regular breaks in shaded areas. Stop your garden work if you experience breathlessness or muscle soreness.

Watch for signs of heat-related illness in yourself and others, such as extremely high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, and loss of consciousness. People who are over 65, as well as those who are overweight, have a higher risk of heat-related illness, according to the CDC.

If you have arthritis, use tools that are easy to grasp and that suit your ability. If you are taking medications that make you drowsy or impair your judgment or reaction time, don't climb ladders, operate power tools or equipment or any other activities that could put you at risk for injury.

It's also important to be up-to-date on your tetanus/diphtheria vaccination. Tetanus lives in the soil and enters the body through breaks in the skin. Gardeners are particularly susceptible to tetanus infections because they dig in the dirt, use sharp tools and handle plants with sharp points.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more [gardening health and safety tips](#).

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