

BACKCOUNTRY HYGIENE

Personal Hygiene Tips

- Make a point to carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer in your pocket and use it frequently - after bathroom breaks; before grabbing a handful of trail mix; before cooking dinner. This cuts down on the prospects of ingesting bacteria that can make you sick - a doubly unpleasant experience when on the trail.
- Whenever you can, don't pass up the chance to dip your feet in a creek. A quick 5-minute stop a couple of times a day to clean your feet, dry and move on does wonders for eliminating bacteria and relieving hot spots that may have been developing into blisters as you hike. Better still, rotate your socks in use while you're at it.
- Speaking of socks, if you camp near water, wash out your socks and hang out to dry overnight. Just make sure you have one dry pair for in the morning, as sometimes they won't dry out completely at night. Tie outside your pack to finish drying the next day.
- Carry a bandana and a small bottle of biodegradable soap to give yourself an occasional sponge bath of sorts - at least your face, underarms, groin, buttocks and feet. This reduces chafing, odors, and bacteria, and you'll sleep better if you're not so sticky everywhere. For minimal impact on the environment, carry water away from the source to take this bath if you are using soap - one way is to include in your pack a container cut from a 1-gallon jug, or buy a collapsible bucket.
- Carry a small container of body lotion or muscle rub and use it on your feet at night after cleaning. Try to sleep in something other than what you hiked in, and hang those hiking clothes to air out overnight when possible. If near water, rinse them out when you can.
- Cosmetics and perfumes attract animals - bears and bugs, for example - so leave that stuff at home.
- Maintaining dental hygiene while camping is comforting and healthful. Include dental floss and a travel-sized travel toothbrush and toothpaste in your pack. Don't rinse out your mouth right near your tent though. As with dishwater, either dispose of it well away from your sleeping area or in running water that will quickly dilute it. Otherwise the aromas will be attractive to bears and other critters.
- An alternative to bathing with water is using handi-wipes, moist towelettes, etc. You can remove a lot of grunge from your body with one or two of these alcohol-soaked cloths. Just pack out what you take in.

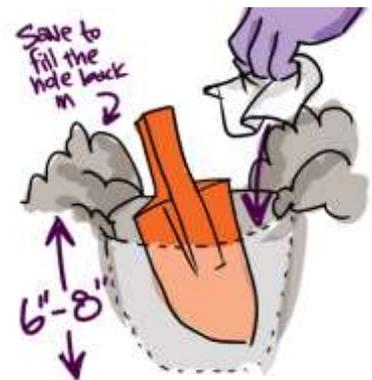
Going to the Bathroom in the Backcountry

1) Go off trail and at least 200 feet from any water source, including springs and streams.

2) Always carry a lightweight plastic backpacker's trowel when you hike for toilet purposes. Like your cat tries to, dig a hole 4-6 inches deep. If the ground is covered with snow, be sure to dig through the snow and create the cat hole beneath the topsoil - this can be labor-intensive if the ground is frozen.

3) Then just squat above it. This is the part novices fear the most, but actually results in much more natural and healthful elimination than sitting at a 90 degree angle on your home toilet. There are a couple of pointers - make sure you're really out of sight; squat with your rear downhill; hang on to a tree or your hiking stick for balance; and make sure your shirt or coat is lifted up in the back. After wiping with TP, get yourself even cleaner back there with moist towelettes - reduce chances of chafing and later discomfort.

4) After using the cat-hole, cover it and the TP with the soil you removed. Revert the site to its natural look by re-scattering leaves, rocks or pine needles over the top. Place a rock on top so the next person along doesn't



step in it or animals try dig it up. Note - in many areas you must pack out the toilet paper, particularly in dry arid areas. Use sealable baggies for that. If fires are allowed, you can burn the TP; just make sure it's reduced to ash.

5) Always follow with a good hand cleaning with waterless sanitizer or soap and water.

6) Keep your trowel as clean as possible - wipe off on grass or sand or wash off after each use. Keep it and your roll of TP in a plastic bag and carry in or on your pack away from your food.

Other tips

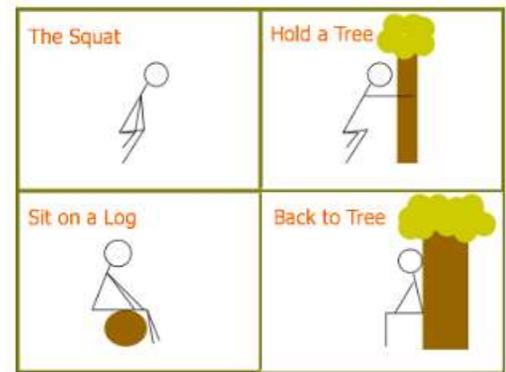
- Above the tree line rock smearing your stool is the accepted technique for human waste management.

- In ecologically sensitive areas (i.e. glaciers) you are required to pack out stool. So people use poop tubes (i.e. Pringles or Lays chip tubes) to pack out their stool in.

- When in a large group consider digging a trench instead of many individual cat holes.

- Always check before you go what the human waste policies are for the area you are visiting.

Backcountry Bathroom Positions



Waste Management Tips

- Plan ahead and pack consumables with minimal trash components. Use Ziploc re-sealable baggies to package individual meal servings instead of their original containers, then use those bags to hold your trash coming out. Avoid cans and other containers with metal - you'll have to carry those in and out.
- If fires are permitted where you camp, you can burn some trash items, but beware of paper not burning all the way to ash, or you still have a trash problem.
- If you see trash on the trail - be a trooper and pick it up; don't wait for "someone to do something about it".
- Bring a heavy duty trash bag with you - it has many potential purposes such as water protection, ground cover, or sleeping bag protector while you hike - and then consolidate your trash in it on your way out.
- Trash needs to be hung away from your sleeping area just like food and any aromatic personal items to keep away from bears and other critters. See more here on bear safety precautions.
- If you have your period while in the backcountry make sure bring extra Ziplocs for your used feminine products. Coffee grounds in the bottom of your Ziploc will help with the odor. If you use tampons you can step on your used tampons to get a lot of the fluid out of them before putting them into a Ziploc. Also consider using a reusable period product like the Diva Cup.



Foot Care

- Always break in your hiking boots before heading into the backcountry. Make sure your boots are tied securely.
- Keep your feet clean and dry. On breaks consider washing your feet, drying them and putting on dry clean socks.
- Deal with hot-spots right away by taping or dressing your hot spot, put lubrication or add a second layer of socks too minimize friction
- Make sure to deal with any blisters that might occur by cleaning, dressing them to reduce pressure and friction. If your blister hasn't popped please avoid sticking any adhesives to your plaster. If your blister has popped make sure to apply antiseptic and monitor for infection.