

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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ATVs: Be as Safe as Possible

As snow-blowers and shovels are tucked away for another season, Albertans are venturing outdoors to enjoy the spring weather. Alberta Health Services (AHS) is reminding all Albertans, and particularly parents of children less than 16 years of age, to make ATV safety a priority.

There are significant risks associated with the use of ATVs. Children less than 16 years of age have not yet developed to the point of having the strength, skills or judgment needed to operate an ATV, and this includes ATVs marketed as 'child-sized'.

Parents of children less than 16 years of age are advised to ensure they do not drive or ride in an ATV.

Albertans **16 years of age and older** are urged to take the following precautions to ensure their ATV excursions are as safe as possible:

- **Get Trained**
Before you hit the trails, get formal hands-on training from a recognized/trained ATV instructor. Don't be shy about refreshing your training seasonally.
- **Wear the Gear**
A helmet can save your life: from 2002 – 2013, 41 per cent of ATV-rider deaths in Alberta were due to head injuries. In 77 per cent of these head injury deaths, the ATV riders were not wearing a helmet. In addition to a helmet, always wear a jacket, long pants, goggles, boots and gloves.
- **Look First**
Be sure you're aware of the weather forecast, fire outlook/potential, and any hazards (geographical, animal or human) that the trail(s) you're on could pose.
- **Buckle Up**

Be sure that you're fastened in properly, and that all gear and equipment (including your ATV restraints) are in proper working condition before you hit the trails.

- **Drive Sober**

Don't drink or do drugs before or while operating an ATV. 55 per cent of those who died in ATV crashes between 2002 and 2013 tested positive for alcohol.

- **Seek Help**

Before you head out on the trail, let others know where you're going and when they should expect you back. This helps your loved ones know when to call for help if you've been gone too long. Take a cell phone or working radio with you, as well as a first aid kit. Never hesitate to call for help if you're stuck, have damaged your ATV, or are injured.

For more information on ATV safety and injury prevention in Alberta, visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/injuryprevention.asp>.