**Bad shoes, good hikes!**

I’ve been nursing a chronic sore ankle ever since I got my knee replaced a year and a half ago. I’ve assumed all along that when I got my knee straightened that it upset my ankle that had grown into carrying my crooked leg. Like many of us do, I’ve been living with it. Patiently waiting for it to readjust to my straight leg and quit hurting.

Now I think that one of the biggest problems is that I haven’t replaced my shoes in a long time and maybe that’s part of the problem. I know how desperately important it is to pay attention to what you have on your feet. So, I’ve got to do better!

The article I’m using for this week’s topic is called “27 hiking mistakes,” from Love Exploring, Buchan, E, 7/6/2020.

The very first mistake people make for hiking (or any other activity) is to wear the wrong footwear. Not only wearing the wrong kind of shoes, but in many cases wearing them for far too long. So, make sure that you have proper shoes on your feet for the activity you are planning to do and replace them regularly.

The second biggest mistake is failing to break in those shoes or boots before going out on long expeditions and events. Having new boots that have not been broken in properly can be a disaster on a long hike.

Which brings us to the third biggest mistake; not preparing properly with first aid items for your hike, which should include a whistle and flashlight/headlamp. Just in case something happens that keeps you into the dark or gets you lost. This also goes hand-in-hand with breaking in those boots and needing a barrier against a hot-spot turning blister!

Next on the list is underestimating your thirst. Those of us who live up here in this altitude understand its intense sun, our dryness and how easy it is to become dehydrated. It’s a serious problem and always needs extra care in preparation. The same attention needs to occur with your snacks and energy selections. No skimping on snacks and food.

Never leave for your activity without at least two layers of clothing on and available for the ever-changing weather, which includes having a waterproof layer available. Being ill-prepared with your clothing is almost as bad as bad shoes. One of the first words of wisdom that I learned early in my hiking/outdoor activity days is that cotton kills, so invest in better clothing for a better outdoor experience.

Even just recently my own kids made this mistake. Failing to factor in down time and truth of actual distance and intensity of their hike. Always expect the hike/ride to take a little longer than you anticipate. Give yourself the time to stop and see the beauty all around you.

Make sure to have a trail map and know how to read it. In today’s world, make sure that you download the trail app while you are still in cellular service before you head into the mountains. Remember that depending on your distance and time, you’ll need to conserve your battery while hiking in order to even use an app.

Tell someone where you are going! Most importantly, if you are going out on your own. Give a window of expectant times you’ll return and be smart about letting them know when you’re back.

Another mistake made by many, including myself and family, is not checking the weather before heading out to play. It’s an easy way to be prepared and have a better experience.

Other mistakes that can also result in problems include not respecting the wildlife, straying from the path, not wearing sunscreen or a hat or eye protection, failing to check permits, forgetting your wallet (or cash and identification) and neglecting local knowledge.

Back to my sore ankles and bad shoes. Checklist for replacing shoes: check the tread on your shoes to know what’s wearing and breaking down, no holes or separation issues, rotate shoes, 500 miles or three to six months!

The biggest mistake people make is not getting out and enjoying our beautiful world! Lace up!