



<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/mtn/ours-bears/securite-safety/ours-humains-bears-people>

### **Safe travel in bear country**

Bears generally prefer to avoid people. However, encounters between bears and people do occur.

- Knowing how to avoid an encounter with a bear is the best way to enjoy the parks, wilderness, and remote areas, safely.
  - In the event you do come across a bear, it is important to know a bit about bear behaviour.
  - How we respond in an encounter with a bear really depends on the type of interaction that is taking place.

### **AVOID an encounter: the best approach**

Bears are extremely sensitive to the stress of human activity. You can help protect these animals (and yourself) by avoiding encounters with them.

- Larger size groups are less likely to have a serious bear encounter. We recommend hiking in a tight group of four or more. Never let children wander.
- **Make noise!** Let bears know you're there. Call out, clap, sing or talk loudly especially near streams, dense vegetation, and berry patches, on windy days, and in areas of low visibility.
  - Bear bells are not enough.
  - Quietness puts you at risk for sudden bear encounters.
  - Watch for fresh bear sign. Tracks, droppings, diggings, torn-up logs, and turned-over rocks are all signs that a bear has been in the area. Leave the area if the signs are fresh.
  - Use officially marked paths and trails and travel during daylight hours.
  - If you come across a large dead animal, leave the area immediately and report it to park or site staff.

### **Bear Spray**

- Carry bear spray with you at all times on the trail, and know how to use it.
  - Bear spray is your “last-resort” tool: have it ready, but try to calmly and slowly get out of the bear’s way first. If the bear comes towards you, yell “Hey Bear!”
  - Bear spray can be effective when used properly.
  - The bear has to be in close range (less than a bus length) for your spray to be effective.
  - Use only if the bear acts aggressively.
  - Be aware that wind, spray distance, rain, freezing temperatures, and product shelf life can all influence its effectiveness.
  - Familiarize yourself with the proper use of bear spray.
  - Spray a short burst outdoors to make sure the can is working properly and to become familiar with the spray radius and your reaction time.
  - **Carry bear spray where you can reach it fast - readily accessible.**





## *NPGS Niagara Peninsula Geological Society Field Trip Handy Info Sheet*

### *Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!*

#### **1) What is bear spray?**

It is a deterrent containing capsaicin, a chemical found in chili peppers. It comes in a small, portable spray canister and is intended to repel a bear in the event of a close encounter.

#### **2) What does it do?**

The canister releases a cone-shaped cloud of pepper spray to a distance of approximately 10 m and at a speed of over 100 km/h. When a bear walks into the spray, its eyes and skin will sting and it will have difficulty breathing - symptoms nasty enough to prompt a retreat. The spray is non-lethal: the bear will be uncomfortable, but unharmed.

#### **3) How do I use it?**

- Remove the safety clip and aim for the bear's face (make sure the nozzle is pointing **away** from you).
- You want to create a wall of spray between you and the bear.
- Give quick, one-second bursts until the bear retreats.
- Leave the area immediately.
- Wind or rain may reduce the spray's effectiveness.
- Be careful not to get in the path of the spray.

#### ***If you SEE a bear***

Stop and remain calm. Get ready to use your bear spray. Do not run away.

#### ***Is the bear UNAWARE of your presence?***

- Move away quietly without getting its attention.

#### ***Is the bear AWARE of your presence?***

- Bears may bluff their way out of an encounter by charging and then turning away at the last second.
- Bears may also react defensively by woofing, growling, snapping their jaws, and laying their ears back.
- Stay calm. Your calm behaviour can reassure the bear. Screams or sudden movements may trigger an attack.
- Speak to the bear. Talk calmly and firmly. This lets the bear know you are human and not a prey animal.
- If a bear rears on its hind legs and waves its nose about, it is trying to identify you.
- Back away slowly. Never run! Running may trigger a pursuit.
- Make yourself appear BIG. Pick up small children and stay in a group.
- Do not drop your pack. It can provide protection.
- If you must proceed, make a wide detour around a bear or wait at a safe distance for it to move on.

#### ***If the bear APPROACHES***

- Stop and remain calm.
- Get ready to use your bear spray.
- Do not run away.
- Assess the bear's behaviour and determine why it is approaching.

#### ***Is it NON-DEFENSIVE?***

A bear may be curious, after your food, or testing its dominance.

- In the rarest case, it might be predatory - seeing you as potential prey.
- All of these non-defensive behaviours can appear similar and should not be confused with defensive behaviours.



## *NPGS Niagara Peninsula Geological Society Field Trip Handy Info Sheet* *Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!*

The bear will be intent on you with head and ears up.

- Talk in a firm voice.
  - Move out of the bear's path.
  - If it follows you, stop and stand your ground.
  - Shout and act aggressively.
  - Try to intimidate the bear.
  - **If it approaches closely, use your bear spray.**

### **Is it DEFENSIVE?**

The bear is feeding, protecting its young, and/or surprised by your presence. It sees you as a threat.

- The bear will appear stressed or agitated and may vocalize.
  - Try to appear non-threatening.
  - Talk in a calm voice.
  - When the bear stops advancing, start slowly moving away.
  - If it keeps coming closer, stand your ground, keep talking, and use your bear spray.
  - **If the bear makes contact, fall on the ground and play dead. Lie still and wait for the bear to leave.**

### **Handling an ATTACK**

Most encounters with bears end without injury.

If a bear actually makes contact, you may increase your chances of survival by following these guidelines. In general, there are 2 kinds of attack:

#### **Defensive**

- This is the most COMMON type of attack.
  - Use your bear spray.
  - If the bear makes contact with you: **PLAY DEAD!**
  - **PLAY DEAD!** Lie on your stomach with legs apart and position your arms so that your hands are crossed behind your neck. This position makes you less vulnerable to being flipped over and protects your face, the back of your head and neck. Remain still until you are sure the bear has left the area.
  - Defensive attacks are generally less than two minutes in duration.

If the attack continues, it may mean it has shifted from defensive to predatory - **FIGHT BACK!**

#### **Predatory**

This type of attack is very RARE.

- The bear is stalking (hunting) you along a trail and then attacks.
- Or, the bear attacks you at night.
  - Try to escape into a building, car, or up a tree.
  - **Use your bear spray and FIGHT BACK.**
  - **FIGHT BACK!**
  - Intimidate the bear: shout; hit it with a branch or rock, do whatever it takes to let the bear know you are not easy prey.
  - This kind of attack is very rare, but it is serious because it usually means the bear is looking for food and preying on you.

It is very difficult to predict the best strategy to use in the event of a bear attack. That is why it is so important to put thought and energy into avoiding an encounter in the first place.