

High-Adventure Risk Advisory to Health-Care Providers and Parents

Northern Tier

Phone: 218-365-4811

Website: www.ntier.org

Northern Tier Experience. Participation at any of the BSA's high-adventure bases or in any unit high-adventure backcountry/wilderness activities can be physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. Each high-adventure base offers a unique experience that is not risk-free. Knowledgeable staff will instruct all participants in safety measures to be followed. Be prepared to listen to and carefully follow these safety measures and to accept responsibility for the health and safety of yourself and others.

Northern Tier Requirements. Each person must be able to carry a 50- to 85-pound pack or canoe from a quarter-mile to 2 miles several times a day on rough, swampy, and rocky portages and paddle 10 to 15 miles per day, often against a headwind. The portage trails can be very muddy, slippery, and rocky, and those conditions can potentially lead to tripping and falling. All participants must wear boots that cover their ankles while on the trails. Climatic conditions can range from 30 to 100 degrees in summer/autumn and from -40 to 40 degrees in the winter. During the Okpik Experience, each person will walk, ski, or snowshoe along snow-covered trails or across frozen lakes, pulling loaded toboggans or sleds for up to 3 miles—or more if on a cross-country ski trek. Refer to the Northern Tier website for specific information.

Be Prepared. While participating in Northern Tier's canoeing and camping backcountry/wilderness areas, life jackets must be worn at all times when on the water. Crew members travel together at all times. Emergency communications via radio, and in more remote locations by satellite phone, are provided by Northern Tier. Radio communication and/or emergency evacuation can be hampered by weather, terrain, distance, time of day, equipment malfunction, and other factors, and are not a substitute for taking appropriate precautions and having adequate first-aid knowledge and equipment. **Please call Northern Tier at 218-365-4811 if you have any questions.**

Seizures (Epilepsy). The seizure disorder must be well-controlled by medication. A well-controlled disorder is one in which a year has passed without a seizure. Exceptions to this guideline may be considered on an individual basis and will be based on the specific type of seizure and likely risks to the individual and/or other members of the crew.

Diabetes Mellitus. Both the person with diabetes and one other person in the group need to be able to recognize signs of excessively high or low blood sugar and adjust the dose of insulin. An insulin-dependent person who was diagnosed or who has had a change in delivery system (e.g., insulin pump) in the last six months is advised not to participate. A person with diabetes who has had frequent hospitalizations or who has had problems with low blood sugar should not participate until better control of the diabetes has been achieved.

Asthma. Asthma must be well-controlled before participating. This means: **1)** the use of a rescue inhaler (e.g., albuterol) less than once daily; **2)** no need for a rescue inhaler at night. Well-controlled asthma may include the use of long-acting bronchodilators, inhaled steroids, or oral medications such as Singulair. You may not be allowed to participate if:

1) you have asthma not controlled by medication; or **2)** you have been hospitalized/gone to the emergency room to treat asthma in the past six months; or **3)** you have needed treatment by oral steroids (prednisone) in the past six months. You must bring an ample supply of your medication and a spare rescue inhaler that are not expired. At least one other member of the crew should know how to use the rescue inhaler. Any person who has needed treatment for asthma in the past three years must carry a rescue inhaler on the trek. If you do not bring a rescue inhaler, you must buy one before you will be allowed to participate.

Allergy or Anaphylaxis. People who have had an anaphylactic reaction from any cause will be required to keep appropriate treatment with them. You and at least one other member of your crew must know how to give the treatment. If you do not bring appropriate treatment with you, you will be required to buy it before you will be allowed to participate.

Recent Musculoskeletal Injuries and Orthopedic Surgery. Participants will put a great deal of strain on their joints. Individuals who have significant musculoskeletal problems (including back problems) or have had orthopedic surgery or injuries within the last six months must have a letter of clearance from their treating physician to be considered for approval, and Northern Tier should be contacted in advance of participation. Permission is not guaranteed.

Psychological and Emotional Difficulties. Parents and advisors should be aware that no high-adventure experience is designed to assist participants in overcoming psychological or emotional problems. Experience demonstrates that these problems frequently become worse when a participant is under stress from the physical and mental challenges of a remote wilderness setting. Medication must never be stopped prior to participation and should be continued throughout the entire experience.

Cardiac or Cardiovascular Disease. Adults or youth who have a history of chest pain, myocardial infarction (heart attack), a family history of premature heart disease, or heart surgery including angioplasty may consider a physician-supervised stress test. Even if the stress test results are normal, the testing is done without portage packs or canoes and does not guarantee safety. If the results are abnormal, the individual is advised not to participate.

Medication. Each participant who needs medication must bring enough medication for the duration of the trip, as well as enough to store two supplies in two separate locations. Due to the possibility of packs and equipment getting wet, every attempt is made to store medications in two separate packs in different canoes while travelling.

Weight Limits. Each participant in a Northern Tier expedition should not exceed the maximum acceptable weight for height in the table shown in Part C of the Annual Health and Medical Record. Those who fall within the recommended weight limits are much more likely to have an enjoyable trek and avoid incurring injuries and other health risks. Extra weight puts strain on the back, joints, and feet. No participant's weight can exceed 295 pounds.



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