

Physicians at Atrium Health Navicent Urge Caution During Hunting Season *Weapons and ATV accidents, tree stand falls and snake bites may lead to ER visits*

MACON, Ga., Oct. 22, 2024 –Physicians at Atrium Health Navicent encourage hunters of all ages to observe proper safety precautions to minimize the risk of common injuries this hunting season. U.S. Census data reports that there are 15.9 million hunters in the U.S. and 769,105 registered hunters in Georgia.

“Fall is an exciting time for many families who enjoy hunting in Georgia. As you get ready for the upcoming hunting season, safety precautions should be at the top of your priority list, no matter if it’s your first time or you’ve been hunting your whole life,” said [Dr. Dennis Ashley](#), medical director of Trauma Services at Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center. “All too frequently, our emergency centers treat hunting-related injuries that could easily be prevented by taking simple measures to keep hunters and those around them safe.”

Physicians at Atrium Health Navicent’s emergency centers typically treat injuries during hunting season that fall into one of four categories: weapons accidents, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) accidents, falls from tree stands and encounters with snakes.

Weapons Accidents

Whether hunting with a bow or a firearm, it is important to remember the following safety tips:

- Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
- Do not place your finger on the trigger unless you are preparing to take a shot.
- Double-check to ensure the bullet’s caliber is appropriate for the firearm.
- Archers should identify a safe background before releasing an arrow. No skyline shots.
- Archers should fully secure arrows before moving, even if they are only repositioning for a better shot.
- Wear orange while in the woods to help other hunters identify you.

ATV Accidents

ATVs are quick, heavy and usually travel on unpredictable paths. Minimize the risk of accidents and injuries by following these tips:

- Wear proper safety gear, including a helmet, while operating an ATV.
- Choose an ATV that is appropriate for the rider’s size and age. Adult ATVs are often too heavy and too fast for an adolescent to safely manage.
- Pay attention to your surroundings.
- Avoid paved roads. ATVs are not intended for streets, and collisions with cars are possible.
- Never operate an ATV while consuming alcohol.

Stand Falls

Falls from tree stands are a leading cause of injury among hunters. If using a tree stand, bear the following in mind:

- Inspect the ladder steps and tree attachments prior to ascending the stand.
- If the stand is attached to a tree, inspect the tree prior to ascending the stand. The tree should be alive and healthy, without any visible rot or damage.
- Use a safety harness. Hook into the harness prior to leaving the ground and leave it attached until you return safely to the ground.
- Use a haul line to pull your unloaded weapon into the stand. Do not carry a firearm or bow into the stand or attach it to your body.

- Tell a friend or loved one where you will be, and when to expect you home. If an accident occurs, someone should know where to find you. Consider carrying a two-way radio or loud whistle to call for help, if needed.

Snake Bites

More than 40 snake species are found in Georgia, and of those, six types are venomous. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 7,000-8,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the U.S. each year. Hunters who spend time outdoors will likely run into a snake from time to time. Follow these tips to avoid potentially life-threatening encounters:

- Wear bite-proof boots and chaps.
- Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.
- Do not place your hands or feet into any area where you cannot see.
- If you encounter a snake, back away slowly. Do not approach or provoke the snake.
- If you or someone in your group is bitten, seek emergency medical treatment immediately.
- Adults should always supervise younger hunters.

Tips for Non-Hunters

Typically, outdoor enthusiasts may be sharing the woods with hunters during the fall. Here are some tips for non-hunters to stay safe during hunting season:

- Learn where and when hunting is taking place. Plan your recreation activities based on this information. Stay out of designated hunt areas.
- Enjoying recreational activities only on designated trails will reduce the likelihood of your entering designated hunt areas.
- Wear bright clothing (like blaze orange) to make yourself easily visible. Avoid earth-toned and animal-colored clothing.
- Don't forget to protect your dog, too. Tie a brightly-colored bandana around your dog's neck or purchase a blaze orange dog vest. Follow appropriate leash requirements.
- Alert hunters to your presence by whistling, singing or carrying on a conversation as you walk. If you hear shooting, raise your voice and let hunters know you are in the vicinity.
- Once a hunter is aware of your presence, don't make unnecessary noise that disturbs wildlife.

When an Emergency Happens

If an accident or injury occurs, seek appropriate medical treatment. For emergency situations, call 911 or seek care at the nearest emergency center. Atrium Health Navicent offers emergency care at the following locations:

- Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center (770 Pine St., Macon)
- Atrium Health Levine Children's Beverly Knight Olson Children's Hospital (888 Pine St., Macon)
- Atrium Health Navicent Peach (1960 Hwy 247 Connector, Byron)
- Atrium Health Navicent Baldwin (821 North Cobb St., Milledgeville)
- Putnam General Hospital, Atrium Health Navicent Partner (101 Greensboro Road, Eatonton)

For non-life-threatening injuries, visit your nearest urgent care provider. Atrium Health Navicent provides urgent care at three Macon locations:

- Atrium Health Navicent Urgent Care North (3400 Riverside Drive, Macon)
- Atrium Health Navicent Urgent Care East (1339 Gray Highway, Macon)
- Atrium Health Navicent Urgent Care Northwest (5925 Zebulon Road, Macon)

To find a doctor, visit www.NavicentHealth.org and click "Find A Doctor."

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](#), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally

recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

About Advocate Health

[Advocate Health](#) is the third-largest nonprofit integrated health system in the United States – created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and [Atrium Health](#). Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](#) in Illinois, Atrium Health in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama, and [Aurora Health Care](#) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health services nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. It is nationally recognized for its expertise in cardiology, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs 155,000 teammates across 69 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations and offers one of the nation's largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to providing equitable care for all, Advocate Health provides more than \$6 billion in annual community benefits.

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