

# Staying Healthy in the SCA

By

Lady Annora Dionisia de Burgh  
Warranted Chirurgeon  
Head Waterbearer of Meridies for 2004-2006

So, now you have taken the step to see what the SCA is all about. Lets talk about how to survive events, fighting, heat or just staying healthy at events in general.

One thing I can't say enough is "*Drink plenty of fluids*". This includes *Water and Gatorade*, decaffeinated soda and the like. Try (key word here is "try") to avoid drinks that contain alcohol , caffeine, ( or at least be moderate in your consumption of these two the night before fighting, for you fighters☺ or when you are going to be at a hot event ), carbonation, and fruit juices. **Alcohol and caffeine** can make the kidneys produce more urine, making dehydration worse. **Carbonation** can cause you to feel more full due to the release of carbon dioxide in the stomach, reducing the amount of fluid you'll drink and possibly causing cramping and discomfort during exercise (fighting and other like activities). **Fruit juices** usually contain a high carbohydrate (sugar) content. Meaning that they might cause cramps, nausea , and/or diarrhea. Not something you want to have when you are out in the middle of the fighting field fully decked out in armor or in the middle of a dance class and suddenly get the "Ah, OH!!!" look on your face and leave your dance partner ,staring after you, on the dance floor. If you really just have to have fruit juices, dilute them with water enough to make it weaker but still keep a decent taste to it.

Please try to maintain a balanced diet, this helps keeps your energy up. Especially eat breakfast. Not necessarily breakfast food, eat something when you first get up and definitely before marching on to the fighting field. Fighters, take warning, not all events have or have enough Waterbearers. Please make sure you have a means of supplying your own water. ( I can't waterbear at ALL the events now can I?! ☺ )

## Use care in food storage and preparation

Food kept in tents can spoil quickly.

Keep perishable foods cold. Block ice usually keeps longer than cubes, but if the weather is hot, it may be necessary to replace the ice several times a day. Don't wait till all the ice has melted to go get more.

Keep your cooler out of the sun and heat. Again, a tent can get very hot. Cover the cooler with a thick blanket or quilt. They will help keep it cool longer. Umm... why not sew your own cooler cover to go with your décor. ☺

Precutting your food at home saves time, space and fingers.

Freeze meats before packing.

Cook your food completely, and try to avoid meats cooked rare (I know there are some of us like our steaks rare and bloody, but it's better to cook it all the way than to end of sick the rest of the event, or worse, sent to the hospital with food poisoning).

Keep all your food covered to avoid flies and other pests.

Seal garbage bags and dispose of them regularly.

Wash your dishes promptly and completely, and properly dispose of waste water promptly after use

## **You and your family**

Drink lots of fluids... stay HYDRATED! Frequent trips to the port-a-castles are good. Lets you know you are staying hydrated.

**Bring** plenty of clothing to layer when cold an change into when wet and when you get cold. Remember you can always take off layers if you get too hot.

**Keep warm and dry in winter months.** Have a place dry and out of the cold winds to sleep. You wouldn't be the first to sleep in your car when its really cold.

**Ensure ventilation** when using heaters of any kind when its cold out.

**Pay attention to personal hygiene.** Wash your hands before and after cooking and eating, and after using the toilet facilities. Cold showers are not fun but they are better than nothing.

**Wear sturdy walking shoes at all times.** *Bring* a change of footwear for when the weather turns wet or cold. Try to find footwear that are period looking but that are also comfortable! Even sandals may not be sufficient foot protection. Going barefoot is not period for persons of gentle birth, which we all are assumed to be.

**Make sure you have any prescription meds you may need with you.** Carry allergy or other emergency meds with you at all times (inhaler, eppy pin, nitroglycerin tablets, or other meds for potentially life threatening situations. An insect bit kit back at camp won't save your life when your are not there.

**USE SUNSCREEN!!!!** of at least 15 SPF or above ( above is highly recommended!) even on cloudy or wet days. Overcast days DO allow the sun's burning rays through. I can not count the number of people I have seen with a bad sunburn cause they thought they would not get burnt! Be careful to reapply as directed or when changing your clothing. Wear a hat, veil, or some other head covering. Sun injuries are at best annoying and at worst life-threatening, so, please, take care.

**Know where your children are at all times and make sure they know where you are.** Except in an immediately life-threatening emergency, no Chirurgeon (First Aid volunteer) may provide first aid to a minor without the parent or event guardian being present, so please don't make the Chirurgeon and event staff look all over site for you.

**Keep a first aid kit in your camp** and make sure everyone that is camping with you knows where it is. Seconds count, the Chirurgeon can not be every where at once.

**Make sure to have plenty of bug repellent.** All of us have heard of West Nile Virus by now and know that mosquitoes are the transmitters, not to mention the little critters make your itch like crazy when they bite you. Need I say more?

Ticks are also bad here in the South and other places. Wear plenty of bug repellent for these pests! A lot of the sites here in the South are outdoors, so ticks are going to be present. Make sure if you are wearing pants to tuck them in to your boots, or keep your legs covered. Treat your garments with the repellents. Check your self and your family for ticks often. Twice a day is good.

Any tick found should be removed as soon as reasonably possible, as the longer the tick feeds the more chance it has of injecting its vile humors into you. Care must be taken to remove the tick in the proper manner as not to distress it too much, causing it to vomit disease-laden juices into its host. Burning the tick or painting it could distress the tick with dire results. Acquire a pair of fine forceps, (tweezers) grasp the head of the tick as close as possible to the skin, and pull straight out slowly and firmly. Watch the wound for signs of infection, which may be treated with ointments and cleansing. If a fever develops and/or the wound starts to develop a rash(a few days after the bite) that forms a circle around the bite giving it an appearance of an archer's target and slowly enlarges, this may be a sign of infection by a tick borne disease and you should seek the services of a doctor immediately!

I know... that was a good bit of info all at one time. Didn't mean to overload your brain with all that, but all of that is really good advice to think about when your go to your next event. If you use some of the advice that was given at your next event, I know my job is done.

Now for the most important piece of advice I can give you,... Have fun and enjoy yourself and those around you.

Good Health and Safe Journeys,

Lady Annora Dionisia de Burgh

### Sources

Friar Galen of Ockham, MC, OP

-in email off of the SCA-Waterbearers Yahoo List

-"Scourge of the Woodlands"

Joseph of Locksley & W.J. Bethancourt III,

-"Connie the Chirurgeon" web page