

Bear Spray Use and Buying Guide

Why Bear Spray?

Bear spray is the most effective means of repelling an attacking grizzly or black bear in a non-toxic, non-lethal manner. Although common sense might suggest that guns would provide greater personal protection, research and experience indicates that human-bear encounters that do not involve firearms are less likely to result in injury to a human or bear.

According to a US Fish and Wildlife report, people who use firearms to defend themselves against charging grizzly bears suffer injury about 50 per cent of the time, while people defending themselves with bear spray escape injury most of the time and injuries that did occur were less severe (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). University of Calgary's Dr. Stephen Herrero found similar results. This is why bear spray is often carried in the backcountry by biologists, professional guides and hikers/campers.

"Even a skilled marksman with steady nerves may have a slim chance of deterring a bear attack with a gun." - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Buying Bear Spray

In Canada, bear spray does not have to be certified or tested. Therefore, it is essential that you purchase your spray from a reputable company.

Purchasing Guide:

- **strength:** spray should be .857% capsaicin
- **container size:** spray should be **at least** 225 grams or 7.9 ounces of net weight
- **type of sprayer:** spray should be in a cloud/cone pattern, preferably with a fibreglass, not plastic nozzle and trigger
- **length of spray:** spray should last at least 8 seconds
- **minimum range:** spray should be delivered at a minimum range of 5 meters or about 16 feet
- **number:** try to carry at least two canisters per group

Not all pepper sprays are the same: Ensure that you are using a bear deterrent spray, not a personal defence product designed for use on people or dogs

When should my bear spray be replaced?

Bear spray that has been discharged for any reason, left in extreme temperatures (above 50° C or below freezing), or has passed its expiry date should be replaced. This is because the seal that holds the propellant (usually nitrogen) can deteriorate and become

compromised, reducing the ability of the product to project the spray effectively when you really need it.

How bear spray works

The aerosol can shoots bursts of atomized capsaicin (a cayenne pepper derivative) up to eight metres, though the spray is most effective at short range. Bear pepper spray causes the membranes of the eyes, nose and lungs of a bear to swell and the result is a nearly total, yet temporary, loss of sight and severe restriction of breathing. Often times, bears that are sprayed leave the area, allowing you time to retreat.

Always carry bear spray so that it is readily available to you. If a bear is approaching you, you can use the spray to deter the bear, spraying a 2 second burst aiming for the eyes, face and nose of the bear. If the bear continues to approach re-apply another 2 second burst.

Nothing can replace good sense and proper safety measures. People whose activities may possibly put them in a situation where they may encounter a bear or other wild animal should educate themselves and be aware of the potential for an attack. Bear spray is ideal for personal defence use when hunting, camping, fishing, hiking and biking or whenever enjoying the great outdoors in bear habitat.

Warning:

When transporting bear spray, always make sure the safety is securely in place and will not fall out. Bear spray should never be transported inside the passenger area of any vehicle or airplane unless in a fully sealed enclosed container. Bear spray should not be sprayed on objects such as tents or humans. This type of use has no deterrent effect on bears.