

“Over the River and Through the Woods” How to Stay Safe at Summer Camp



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Summer is a time when kids are out of school and excited about going to sleep-away camp. Help your kids learn simple tips to stay safe and healthy at camp.

Work with camp authorities.

Follow camp guidelines for your child’s health and safety.

Encourage safe physical activities.

Children should get 60 minutes or more of physical activity on most days of the week. To help prevent injury, pack protective gear, such as helmets and life jackets, if the camp will not be providing them. Tell your kids not to swim if they are alone or if they have diarrhea and do not drink the water they swim in.

Discuss concussion symptoms and danger signs.

Teach kids that all concussions are serious. Any kid or teen with a suspected concussion should not participate in sports and recreation activities until symptom-free and given the OK from a health care professional.

Teach your kids to stay hydrated.

Explain to your kids that the human body needs fluids on a regular basis. They shouldn’t wait until they feel thirsty to drink water. Encourage your kids to drink plenty of water or other non-carbonated, sugar-free fluids throughout the day.

Teach your kids to avoid wild animals.

Teach kids that animals can carry diseases that are dangerous to people. Instruct kids that if they are bitten or scratched by a wild animal, immediately wash the wound with soap and water and report the bite to camp healthcare personnel. Encourage them to enjoy watching animals from a safe distance in their natural surroundings.

Teach your kids how to prevent head lice infestation.

Teach kids to avoid head-to-head (or hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities and not to share combs, brushes, scarves, hair ribbons, hair bands, clothing, hats, brushes, or towels.

Get your kids vaccinated.

Make sure your kids’ vaccinations are up-to-date. Ask their doctor or nurse what vaccines are recommended for summer camp.

Pack protection.

Be sure your kids have plenty of insect repellent and sunscreen to wear to protect themselves from mosquitoes, ticks, and the sun. Pack layers of light-weight, light-colored clothes for hot days and blankets and warm clothes for cool nights.

Be proactive.

Find out how you will be notified if your child becomes ill and what the procedures are for caring for your child, if indicated. Teach your kids to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze and to throw the tissue in the trash after using it; to wash their hands often with soap and water (or alcohol-based hand cleaners), especially after they cough or sneeze; and to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Also, tell your kids to notify camp staff if they or someone they come into contact with becomes ill. Keep your kids at home when they are sick.

Prepare your kids.

Make sure your kids are prepared. Teach them what to do in an emergency. Use a packing checklist to help start them out on the right foot at camp.

- Adequate bedding/sleeping bag and extra blankets
- Light-weight, light-colored clothing, including long sleeves and pants
- Insect repellent containing DEET
- Broad-spectrum sunscreen and lipscreen with SPF 15 or higher
- Wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses
- Healthy on-the-go snacks and other food
- Water and other sugar-free fluids
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Life jacket, helmet, and other protective gear
- First-aid kit
- Medical records

For more camping tips, visit
<http://www.cdc.gov/family/camping/>