



A Healthy Camp Begins and Ends at Home!

A healthy camp really does start at home. Here are some things you can do to help your child have a great camp experience. Review the camps criteria for participation at camp. This includes mental, emotional, and social health (MESH) criteria that outlines behavior expectations, social interactions, and functioning within a community setting.



1. If your child is showing signs of illness such as running a temperature, throwing up, has diarrhea, nasal drainage and/or coughing/sneezing, keep the child home and contact your camp director. This greatly reduces the spread of illness at camp but also supports your child's recovery. Know your camp's policy about illness and camp attendance.
2. Teach your child to sneeze/cough in his/her sleeve and to wash his/her hands often while at camp, especially before eating and after toileting.



3. Are there situations at camp that could potentially elicit a strong emotional response from your child? If your child has mental, emotional, or social health challenges, talk with a camp representative before camp starts. Proactively discussing a camp's ability to accommodate a child can help minimize – if not eliminate – potential problems.



4. Talk with your child about telling their counselor, the nurse or camp director about problems or things that are troublesome to them at camp. These camp professionals can be quite helpful as children learn to handle being lonesome for home or cope with things such as losing something special. The counselors can't be helpful if they don't know about the problem – so talk to them.
5. Talk to your camper about what they do when they have uncomfortable feelings (anger, sadness). What are three things they can do to de-stress while at camp?

Do you know how to take care of yourself at camp? This includes eating well, sleeping enough, and making friends.



6. Should your child need a particular nutrition plan because of allergies, intolerances or a diagnosis (e.g., diabetes), note these on the Health History form but also contact the camp to make sure (a) they have noted that need and (b) the camp can address it. Discuss how your child will receive appropriate meals and snacks then explain that to your camper. Should your child be uncomfortable with the plan, arrange for a camp staff member to assist/monitor the process until the child is comfortable.



7. Make sure your child has and wears appropriate close-toed shoes for activities such as soccer and hiking, and that your child understands that camp is a more rugged environment than the sub/urban setting. Talk with your child about wearing appropriate shoes to avoid slips, trips and falls that, in turn, can result in injuries such as sprained ankle.



8. Send enough clothes so your child can dress in layers. Mornings can be chilly and afternoons get quite hot. Dressing in layers allows your child to remove clothing as s/he warms while still enjoying camp.



9. Fatigue plays a part in both injuries and illnesses – and camp is a very busy place! If your child is going to a day camp, be sure they get enough rest at night. If the child will be at a resident camp, explain that camp is not like a sleepover; they need to sleep, not stay up all night!

10. Remember to send sunscreen appropriate to the camp's geographic location and that your child has tried at home. Teach your child how to apply his/her sunscreen and how often to do so.



11. Send a reusable water bottle if not provided by the camp. Instruct your child to use it and refill it frequently during their camp stay. Staying hydrated is important to a healthy camp experience, something your child can assess by noting the color of their urine (“pee”); go for light yellow.

12. Should something come up after camp experience– you see an unusual rash on your child or the child shares a disturbing story – contact the camp's representative and let them know. Camps want to partner effectively with parents and caregivers; sharing information makes this possible.



13. Want to learn more? Talk with your camp director and/or the health supervisor. Build the partnership between you and your child's camp leadership team. It's one way to help your child have the best camp experience possible!