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# **Keeping children safe at camp.**

By L.A. McKeown

From nature walks to cookouts to sing-a-longs -- camp has many fun and exciting things to offer kids freed from school and homework during the long, hot summer months.

But before packing your child off to camp, you should get to know what medical and safety services are available -- or not, as the case may be.

For starters, according to recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, a good camp will have written health policies and protocols. And all children attending the camp should be required to have had a complete exam by a doctor in the past year and be up-to-date on all childhood shots.

Before camp starts, parents should make sure the leaders have a detailed health history of their child, including any significant illnesses, operations, injuries, allergies, and any current medical problems.

"A lot of camps have a nurse or other medical person on-site. That would be an important question to ask when looking at camps -- what kind of medical support do they have, and is there a place where kids can go if they don't feel well," says Garry Gardner, MD, a pediatrician in private practice in Darien, Ill., and a member of the academy's national panel on injury and poison prevention.

"Most camps, I would think, would have first-aid supplies on the premises -- but that's a valid question as well. How do they stock the first-aid or the medical office or clinic?"

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## **What, Exactly, Will Your Kid Be Doing?**

Gardner says parents should also ask questions about activities available at a potential camp. If your child will be involved in boating, [swimming](https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/guide/get-into-swimming), or other water sports, for example, you'll want to know about such things as life jackets, supervision, and the CPR certification of instructors.

While parents probably will not be told about every cut, scrape, or [bruise](https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/guide/bruises-article) their child gets at camp, they will want to familiarize themselves with the procedure in place to deal with a serious situation, such as a broken bone or an illness. This is particularly important for parents whose children attend camps far from home.

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## **What's the Prescription for Handling Medications?**

Parents who must send medication to camp with their child should know who supervises such things and what the rules are regarding over-the-counter drugs. Robillard says her camp discourages parents from sending nonprescription [medications](https://www.webmd.com/drugs/index-drugs.aspx) -- but if children do bring these, they must be handed over and taken under supervision.

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## **Keeping children safe at home**

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## **1. Recognize the stranger danger myth.**

We tend to think of abuse being perpetrated by strangers lurking around a playground or park or approaching kids in white vans. That’s not the case. In fact, 93 percent of people are abused by someone known to them. So while you should consider the risk of people unknown to you, also consider the risk of people known to you.

## **2. Do a background check on anyone you leave your kids with, from occasional babysitters to piano teachers.**

It’s better to be safe than sorry, and people who work with children—and who have nothing to hide—will understand your decision. And don’t think just because you are leaving your child with a woman they are safe. About 10 percent of offenses are committed by women. Also, be aware that other kids can abuse your children too—about one third of all cases of abuse against children are perpetrated by someone under the age of 18.

## **3. Teach your children that their bodies are their own.**

Respect their decision to say no to tickles, hugs and kisses. This can be hard for parents and grandparents who want to show affection. Still, we want to give children the message that they control who can touch them and when, and thus we have to respect their wishes.

<https://www.webmd.com/baby/features/keeping-kids-safe-at-summer-camp#3>

<https://www.workingmother.com/10-ways-to-keep-your-child-safe-from-sneakiest-sexual-abuser#page-2>