



Planning *Your* Child's Summer

April showers bring May flowers, goes the saying. But for parents, spring also brings questions about children's summer plans. Many parents are starting to think about summer childcare, while others are starting to plan for a family vacation. And if your children are older, you may be thinking about summer camp.

The tips below can help you weigh your options and make the best choice for your family.

Finding and choosing

Finding quality childcare for the summer involves the same basic steps as choosing year-round care. Research and compare the resources in your area – such as childcare centers; in-home caregivers; arrangements with friends, relatives or neighbors; day camps; and extended-day programs.

To narrow down your choices, start by making calls or visiting the potential sites. At the very least, ask around to see if anyone has used the site you have in mind. (You may be able to find reviews of the sites online as well.)

The camp experience

There are four basic types of summer camps: day programs, overnight camps, day programs with trips, and special needs.

Information on available camps can be found from a variety of sources, such as libraries, schools, churches, community centers, sports teams, and your local museums. A web search can also yield valuable information. For example, the American Camp Association (<http://find.acacamps.org/>) website allows you to search for a camp by location, activities, cost, special needs, and more.

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Hitting the road

If you are planning a family road trip, try to focus on the experiences that are valuable for your child, yet low-stress for you. Here are some tips:

- **Plan, plan, plan.** Get all the travel guides and maps you need. Plan your routes and schedules, with lots of time for stops, traffic and detours. Pack smartly, so the items you need are easy to access. List the things you need to do before you go – such as buying swim gear or washing summer clothes.
- **Health and safety first.** Make sure your car and seatbelts are in good working condition. List the emergency and safety items you are likely to need – such as a flashlight, jumper cables, a first-aid kit, sunscreen, and extra drinking water. Make sure activities such as swimming and hiking are age-appropriate, and that your children are properly supervised and equipped.
- **Keep your child engaged.** Nothing adds to vacation stress like the time-honored “Are we there yet?” and “I’m bored!” Have some fun games planned to make the travel time go faster, such as map reading or word games.

If you need more help in planning your child’s summer, remember – your EAP is here for you. Start with the member website and browse through the childcare directories. You can also call MHN’s toll-free line and ask to speak with a childcare expert. Our childcare experts will give you referrals for childcare providers in your area.

With the right planning, you and your family can make great memories of summer that will last a lifetime.

Need help?

Call toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

1-866-EAP-4SOC | 1-866-327-4762
TTY/TDD callers, please dial 1-800-327-0801.

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