



THE OFFICIAL NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

AAP News

Volume 33 • Number 6
June 2012
www.aapnews.org

AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Help your child avoid homesickness at camp with these tips

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Trying new activities and meeting new people at summer camp is a great adventure for many children, but being away from home also can be a fearful experience.

Anxiety about leaving home is perfectly normal for children. In fact, 90% of children who attend overnight summer camp feel some level of homesickness while they are away, according to the American Camp Association. However, 20% of children report feeling serious levels of distress. Such levels of anxiety can interfere with the positive experience that children might have at camp.

Summer camp builds children's self-esteem, relationship skills, independence and leadership skills, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The AAP and the NYU Child Study Center offer the following tips for how parents can help prepare their child emotionally for camp and prevent or lessen homesickness:

- Involve your child in the process of choosing and preparing for camp.
- Work with your child to learn about the camp so that she knows what to expect.
- Discuss homesickness openly with your child.
- Compare the time your child will spend at camp with pre-



vious enjoyable experiences of similar duration that she (or he) may have had.

- Have your child practice being away from home by sleeping over at friends' or relatives' homes.
- Avoid expressing personal doubts or concerns about the experience your child will have.
- Avoid making a "pick up plan" with your child because this sets the expectation that she will not like the experience.
- Communicate confidence in your child's ability to handle being away from home.
- Make sure the camp is equipped to handle any special medical needs your child may have.
- Talk to your pediatrician if you are unsure about whether your child is ready for separation.

— Hilary Rasch

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