# A Healthy Camp Starts at Home!

A healthy camp really does start at home. Here are some things you can do to assure your child has a great summer camp experience.

* When children show signs of illness, it can be important to keep them home. Call us and we will help you decide the best course of action. We will do everything we can to help you reschedule your child’s week if possible should they have to miss due to illness.
* Teach your child to sneeze in his/her sleeve, and to wash his/her hands often at camp. Talk with them ahead of time about the strategies we use to stop the spread of viruses. Encourage them to follow all required COVID mitigation strategies.
* Shoes with a backstrap are a requirement for activities such as sports and hiking. This will help avoid slips, trips, and falls, which could cause injuries. Stress to your child the importance of wearing closed-toed shoes to prevent a toe, foot, and/or ankle injury.
* Send enough clothes so your child can wear layers. Mornings can be chilly and by afternoon it will be hot. This enables your child to peel his/her layers off as the weather warms.
* Fatigue plays a part in injuries. Explain that camp is not like a sleepover. Explain to your child that he/she should not try to stay up all night!
* Don’t forget to send sunscreen, and instruct your child how to use sunscreen.
* Please send a reusable water bottle. Your child can refill it frequently during their camp stay. Staying hydrated is very important in the summer

### Camper Mail

Discuss correspondence—“There will be no phone calls; however we can both write letters.”

***Plan ahead so that all mail arrives by Wednesday***.  
If you plan to mail letters or packages to camp remember to plan ahead! They will need to be mailed prior to your child’s departure from home to arrive on time. Please do not send any food in camper packages.

* You can send letters to   
  Attn: Camper Name & Housing Group,   
  PO Box 490,   
  Old Fort, NC 28762
* [email via the message center on your account](https://www.ultracamp.com/communication.aspx?idCamp=1220&campCode=CGN).
  + Explain that you can send email that our office will print and deliver   
    (be sure to include the campers name & housing group in the subject line).
  + You can invite friends and family to email as well using the “Friend Accounts” button. This will send them an email with instructions for linking to your account in order to send emails and view the photo gallery from your camper’s week!

But be mindful that daily letters can trigger homesickness. Plan to send only a few. Send your child equipped with paper, pens, and stamped envelopes. Help them address them ahead of time. Writing is great therapy. Being able to share their fun with you is part of why they are missing home. Letters are a great way for them to do that. They probably won’t arrive until after your child is home but you can have fun reading them together and remembering the fun they had!

# Homesickness is a good thing. ***Really!***

Learning to overcome homesickness is a critical developmental process in a child’s life that can only occur by going through it. Summer camp is a great place to practice this skill and we are here to coach campers through this experience. Studies suggest that 97% of campers feel some form of homesickness their first time away from home with most campers discovering healthy ways to cope within 48 hours of arriving at camp. ***We need your help too*** because a lot of homesickness prevention occurs prior to a child arriving at camp.

## What you can do

### Talk about it.

* Talk intentionally - frame the conversation to empower.
* Talk about what to do when feeling homesick — encourage your child to talk to a cabin leader or a director. This is a message they need to hear loud and clear. It is okay to confide in the adults at camp. Your children need to know that you trust these people and approve of this place.
* Talk about a time when you felt homesick and what you did to cope.
* Kids will have rational and irrational fears about things happening back home while they are away. Try to minimize opportunities for these thoughts. There are some things better left unsaid to your child before they spend time away from you (i.e. if you are planning to jump from an airplane while your child is away, you may want to wait to tell them about your experience after they return from camp).

### Countdown to Camp

Look at calendars daily. Help children comprehend how much time they will be gone prior to leaving. This is especially useful when the child is looking forward to something (a birthday, end of school, sports activity or recital or performance). It gives them a visual way to organize time. This is one of the strategies our staff will use at camp as well. They will talk about what is coming up in the week each day so kids have something to look forward to and can mentally manage their time. When homesickness is severe, creating a paper calendar, putting things they are looking forward to, and then letting them cross off the days is remarkably helpful!

### Shop & Pack Together

[Camper Pack List](https://www.ultracamp.com/assets/1220/documents/Camper)

Plan a shopping trip to help your child feel prepared. Help them pack their bags. Practice spending time away. Have your child spend the night at other people’s houses so that they get accustomed to sleeping in new settings.

### Pick Up Deals

Please don’t ever make them. Ever. Many severely homesick campers have said, “I was told that if I don’t like camp, I can call home and get picked up.” Your child is going to learn SO much about themselves during their week away from you! Keep all talk ahead of time positive. Don’t let failure be an option. But also DON’T WORRY, if the homesickness is severe, I ***will*** call you. You ***will*** be a part of the planning for the best outcome for your child if needed. You know your child better than I do! In rare cases, a child does go home midway through the week. My goal is to have them still wanting to come back even if they aren’t successful this year. I will not let them simply be miserable. We will work as a team to make it a great experience no matter the outcome.