

Countdown to Camp



As summer approaches, consult this list of things to do to ensure that you are ready for your Earth Camp experience. Customize the list with the dates that pertain to your session of camp.

DATE TO DO FOR CAMP

June 1st The Confirmation and Parent/Guardian Agreement Sheet with the remainder of your camp balance is due.

____/____ Arrange to have the Medical Exam Form completed. This may require a physical or simply having the doctor fill out the form.

1 week before camp Start to gather all the items on the packing list. Make sure to label important items.

____/____

Saturday before camp Double-check your packing list. Review the completed Health ____/____ History and Medical Exam Forms. Make sure everything is in order for check-in.

CAMP!!! Pack up and arrive at W. Alton Jones. Check-In is from 2 to 3pm. Parents and campers check in together. Have all of your completed forms and any medications (labeled) with you.

Sunday ____/____

Sunday – Friday WOW! An incredible camp experience in progress!

Friday Family Program begins at 2:00pm. Check-out follows immediately. Photo ID is required to sign out your camper. Please leave pets at home. Happy but tired camper falls asleep on drive home.

____/____



SOME THOUGHTS ON HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness is either a mild or severe form of anxiety, which can sometimes occur until a child becomes adjusted to the camp surroundings and social environment. It is a very real and natural emotion that can occur in anyone, child or adult, when they leave familiar people and places for a new adventure. Going away to camp is an experience in separation for parent and child. It is important that both are prepared for it before check-in day.

How can we help campers avoid homesickness?

Before Camp:

First time campers will benefit from having gone on other less threatening experiences away from home such as overnights with grandparents and friends or attending a day camp. Involving your child in as many decisions as possible about camp beforehand can also help. Pack the child's bags with familiar clothing and special mementos. A favorite stuffed animal can be very comforting, even for children who seem to be “beyond” that phase. It can provide a treasured reminder of home.

Talk to your child about the kinds of fun they will have exploring new camp activities and meeting new friends. Families should speak openly about the possibility of homesickness. Discuss what camp will be like well before your child leaves home and discuss any concerns. Don't tell children up front that you will “rescue” them if they don't like camp right away. Most homesickness fades away as the child becomes comfortable with their surroundings. Also, for some children overcoming homesickness can be a milestone in their development.

One suggestion is to send an encouraging letter that will be waiting for them when they arrive at camp. Camp Fire Boys and Girls conducted a study which concluded that a written message letting kids know they're important, loved, and appreciated can make a lasting impact on their lives. Letters should not include any bad news or stories about what the family is doing that may leave the child feeling left out. Also, don't dwell on how much you, the pet, or siblings miss them. We don't want campers to forget about home, we just don't want them to dwell on home to the exclusion of their current camp experience.

On Check-in Day:

Check-in day can be the most exciting yet most difficult for both parents and children. On check-in day, try not to dwell on the subject of homesickness prior to your arrival at camp. Direct your child towards thinking of the positive things they will be involved in during their stay. After checking in help them move their gear into their cabin and assist them in organizing their space, meeting their cabin leaders and a few other cabin mates. Try not to linger too long. Once they are settled, it is time to say goodbye. Give words of encouragement, say your good-byes, and leave them to their experience. Some children will jump enthusiastically into the fray. Some will ease in slowly. Some will attempt to make you feel guilty for “abandoning” them. It is all normal behavior. Soon they will be engaged in exciting activities.

During Camp:

Once the camp program is underway, we try to keep campers so busy that they will have little time to reflect on homesickness. Most child psychologists agree that telephone calls to or from home make homesickness much worse or stimulate it in children who are not experiencing homesickness. Because of this, we do not allow campers to call home except in cases of severe, persistent homesickness. Our approach is to get them involved and engaged as much as possible in what is happening around them. However, you may call at any time to speak with the camp coordinator and staff about how your son or daughter is doing. The staff may have to call you back after checking on them, but they will give you an honest appraisal of how they are getting along.

According to the experts, children overcome homesickness and adjust to camp within a day or two in the vast majority of cases. At camp, children learn to problem-solve, make social adjustments to new and different people, learn responsibility, and gain new skills to increase their self-esteem. The goal of camp is to provide a safe, fun, and educational experience for children, while assisting their positive growth and development. It would be unfortunate to have a child miss out on developing these life skills because of an early bout of homesickness. With support and encouragement, most children adjust very quickly to their new camp environment.

TICKS AND YOUR CHILD

Blacklegged ticks, also known as deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*), which can carry Lyme Disease as well as the less common Human Granulocytotropic Anaplasmosis (HGA) and Babesiosis, are prevalent in Rhode Island. Disease carrying ticks have been found in 43 states and are common in many parts of the Northeast. Caution is appropriate for anyone spending time in the outdoors. Here are answers to some commonly asked questions about ticks.

What is the likelihood of my child getting a tick-borne disease at Alton Jones? It is unlikely that your child will get a tick-borne disease from attending a program at the URI W. Alton Jones Campus. We work diligently to minimize risks and provide maximum protection for each child who attends our programs. We feel it is important to keep parents informed so that if a child displays symptoms, a prompt diagnosis can be made and proper treatment can be given.

What measures are taken to prevent tick bites? While the risk of getting a tick-borne illness at W. Alton Jones is low, we take a proactive approach. We teach children to be aware of ticks and methods of tick-bite prevention. We talk to them about ticks at their first orientation meeting. We teach them how to check themselves for ticks and frequently remind them to do so. We work to keep our trails trimmed back and we make every effort to avoid high-tick areas.

What if a tick bites my child? In the event that an embedded tick is found on a child, a trained staff member will promptly remove the tick. It is possible for an infected tick to be embedded for up to 48 hours before transmitting a disease. Prompt tick removal will reduce the likelihood of disease transmission. We call the parents of any child who is bitten by a tick so that they can help monitor the child for symptoms once they are home.

What are the symptoms of tick-borne diseases? We encourage all parents and children to become familiar with the symptoms since a tick bite can go undetected. If any symptoms occur, contact your doctor and tell them that your child may have been exposed to ticks. Many symptoms are flu-like while tick-borne diseases are most likely to occur outside of the normal flu season.

- **Lyme Disease:** Early symptoms generally appear within a week and include an expanding (often but not always bulls-eye shaped) skin rash that can be, but is not always, near the bite site. The rash occurs in 60% to 80% of all cases, appears 3 days to 1 month after the bite, and confirms a diagnosis of Lyme Disease. Also watch for chills, fever, headache, stiff neck, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, dizziness and aching joints and muscles. Another possible symptom is swelling and pain in the joints, especially the knees. These symptoms may not seem serious enough to warrant initial concern. Lyme Disease is the most common tick-borne disease and is treatable with antibiotics.
- **Human Granulocytotropic Anaplasmosis (HGA):** Symptoms include fever, headache, malaise, chills, sweating, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting. Symptoms may be severe and it is sometimes initially misdiagnosed as meningitis. This disease is rare but has been increasing in recent years. It is treatable with tetracycline derivative drugs (used with caution since some drugs will permanently stain children's teeth).
- **Babesiosis:** Symptoms are generally mild or go unnoticed and may require no treatment but can be severe in rare cases. Symptoms occur within 1 to 4 weeks and include a gradual onset of malaise, loss of appetite, and fatigue followed within a week or so by fever, drenching sweats, shaking chills, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle pain, weakness, and depression. This disease is extremely rare particularly in children, however people with impaired immune systems or those who have had their spleen removed are at risk of severe and possibly fatal reactions.

What can parents do to help prevent tick bites? Insect repellents can be sprayed on clothing or skin to help prevent tick bites. Be sure that the label says it is effective against ticks and that it contains 30% or less of the chemical DEET since that is the maximum concentration currently recommended for children. Permethrin is highly effective against ticks but can only be applied to clothing. (Find pre-treated clothing at www.insectshield.com). Light colored clothing helps in locating ticks. Keeping ticks off children and removing them before they bite or transmit a disease are key to prevention.

Assist us in tick bite prevention by helping your son or daughter thoroughly check themselves for ticks as soon as they return home. Remove any embedded ticks with tweezers. Launder dirty clothing promptly and dry at high temperatures. Know and watch for symptoms of tick-borne diseases.

Please call 401-397-3304 ext. 6043 if you have further questions or if your child contracts a tick-borne disease and you believe it was from attending a program at Alton Jones (we try to keep track of cases). We welcome your comments.