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SUMMER CAMP AND FOOD ALLERGIES

Summer camps present specific challenges for keeping children with food allergies safe. When considering sending your child to camp, it is essential to prepare ahead of time.

In choosing a camp, consider asking about the following circumstances:

- Is the camp accredited?
- Does the camp have a health team (physicians, camp nurses) or other designated personnel to handle an emergency?
- Does the camp have a policy for managing food allergic children?
- How far is the camp from an emergency facility? If rural area, does this facility have a doctor available and/or is there EMT/ 911 service?
- Where will medications to treat an allergic reaction be kept?
- Will your camper be outside the camp (lake, overnight camp-out, bike or hiking trails)? If so, what emergency plan will be in place?
- How will the camp communicate a child's food allergy information to essential personnel (the child's counselor, activity leaders, kitchen coordinator)?
- How will the camp help prevent accidental ingestions (e.g., food labeled in dining area, creating safe meals for a trip or cook out, safe snacks in cabins, allergen avoidance in craft areas)?
- What plan will be in place in the dining hall by the food service personnel to ensure that your child can eat safely? Are they educated about creating a safe meal?

The following should be completed before arriving at camp:

- Make personal contact with the director of the camp and the health team supervisor to discuss your child's food allergies.
- Make sure that the camp application and/or health form is completed and fully describes the food allergy.
- Provide the camp with your child's WRITTEN TREATMENT PLAN from your doctor and a recent photo
- Check the expiration date of all medications and replace any expired ones.
- Make sure that you know the camp's medication policy (labels on medications, extra doses, whether your child can/should carry epinephrine).
- Ensure they have your emergency contact information.

Educate your child regarding their food allergy, as appropriate for age:

- Safe and unsafe foods.
- Strategies for avoiding unsafe foods (never trade foods, don't eat foods outside dining hall with unknown ingredients).
- Symptoms of an allergic reaction and to notify an adult if there are symptoms
- How to inject epinephrine.

RESOURCES

-This program has additional information sheets that you may find helpful

-Explore additional educational materials, for example, from Food Allergy Research & Education (www.foodallergy.org)

Sources: Association of Camp Nurses, Camping Magazine (10/2000), FAAN

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