

How to Balance Your Family's Active Summer Schedule

June 04, 2019 | AdventHealth



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Kids everywhere dream about summer break, but it can be a challenging time if you're a parent.

You know it isn't always easy—or affordable—to keep your children occupied. What easy daily routine during the school year is suddenly upended over the summer, and you're left wondering how to create a new one that keeps everyone on track and happy?

We believe the keys to a successful summer—and managing your family's hectic schedule—are planning and flexibility.

Plan Well, Stay Flexible

Finding suitable childcare—especially with the added strain on the budget—can be stressful for many families. Planning early, when there's plenty of time to sift through your options and to get creative with solutions, can lessen the burden when summer comes.

Many childcare options exist today that offer plenty of learning and personal growth opportunities for your kiddos without breaking the bank. You might consider:

At-Home Care

Choosing at-home care means you can avoid alarms, breakfast on-the-fly, rushed drop-offs and being late for your important meeting.

Alternating Work Schedules

Some companies provide flexible work schedules and are willing to work with you. Consider arranging an alternating day and night schedule for you and your spouse or partner. While it may not be ideal for nurturing your marriage, it is temporary, and will allow for a more relaxed family routine.

Babysitter/Nanny

If you're unable to adjust your work schedules, an in-home babysitter or nanny may be a good option. This could be a relative who's willing to help, or someone you hire. Bringing someone into your home allows for the same relaxed routine, and can go a long way in helping you balance your work and home priorities.

Options Away from Home

If at-home care doesn't work out for your family, take heart. There are plenty of home care and center-based options to support you throughout the summer. Since you'll have to transport your children in this scenario, a well-thought-out morning routine will go a long way in starting your days off on the right foot. Have a family meeting to create the plan, make sure everyone understands their role and maybe even have a dry run.

Home Day Care

Many people offer summer care in their homes for extra income, including teachers who are off during the summer. This can be a good lower-cost option that, in many cases, affords your children more one-on-one attention.

School-Based Programs

Many schools offer childcare programs for elementary school kids. These programs typically include outdoor activities, arts and crafts, drama classes and team sports. Check with your local school district for more information.

Traditional Day Care

Most facilities provide summer programs for school-aged children. These programs fill up quickly, so check with them before summer break to get on their list and complete all the required paperwork. It's often easier, and less expensive, to get your child accepted to the day care if you already have a younger child enrolled.

Short-Term Activities and Care

If you aren't in need of full-time care, but do need help with organized activities to keep the kids social and engaged, there are many community resources and programs. However, because times, dates and even the activities themselves will vary according to each child's age, it can be a bit of a juggling act to everyone where they need to be. Strong organizational skills are required—and you may sometimes feel like an Uber driver.

Make sure to keep a calendar posted where everyone sees it several times each day, and make reviewing the next day's agenda part of your family's nightly routine.

For parents, especially if you have to divide and conquer, apps that allow you to share a calendar, to-do list and reminders is ideal.

Summer Day Camps

Some community parks, kids' art museums or local recreation departments run summer camps for elementary through middle school aged children. These camps offer various activities to stimulate and educate your children.

Vacation Bible School

Most churches, regardless of denomination, offer Vacation Bible School (VBS) during the summer. These typically last one week and have a small registration fee. It's possible to register your children with several different VBS programs in your city as the times and dates vary.

Organized Activities

Team activities, such as sports, dance, cheerleading or gymnastics offer kids a fun way to stay active and interact with friends. And, from teamwork and good sportsmanship to specific sports skills and training, these activities teach skills that will be useful for a lifetime.

Unorganized Play

Long before "play dates" were a thing, kids were pushed out the backdoor at sunup, and weren't expected to return unless they were hungry or hurt. If you remember going door-to-door to organize your own game of stickball or putting on a neighborhood talent show, you'll admit that finding ways to occupy yourself and make friends on your own were important steps in your development.

Self-Care for Parents

Summer means increased activity for your household. Juggling the responsibilities of work and home become more stressful if not managed successfully. Keeping the kids happy, healthy and entertained leaves little time for self-care, but be sure to make it a priority. Factor in some time for yourself each week to recharge and renew your outlook for the week. Some ways to do this:

Quiet Reflection: Become aware of your thoughts and emotions in a quiet environment through silence and deep breathing. Focusing on the present moment and calmly accepting your mental, emotional and physical states without self-judgment will help you achieve calm.

Plan a Date Night with Your Spouse: Get a sitter for the night and enjoy a few hours alone to reconnect with your spouse. Try to avoid talking about the kids and focus on being a couple.

Physical Activity and Stretching: Whether you participate on a sports team, stretch in your living room to energize your muscles or go for a run, physical activity helps to keep your body strong and can clear your mind of its clutter.

Don't Sweat the Schedule, You've Got This

Use your summer as a chance to strengthen the family bond, to relax and to renew everyone's spirit. Focus on what's most important, and don't sweat the small stuff.

If you need support in your family's whole-health journey this summer, we're here to help. [Find a provider](#), who can help you find balance in body, mind and spirit.

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