



## Summer scheduling

Summer is here and that means more downtime for kids. Although summer provides rest from the hectic school schedule, it's important for kids with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to maintain as consistent a schedule as possible. In order to help manage routines and set expectations, consider:

- Keeping a regular schedule. Mealtimes and bedtimes should be close to the same time every day.
- Planning for consistent structure throughout the day. Build in some time to review skills learned at school, work on social skills, play and rest.
- Using a picture schedule to help your child anticipate weekly activities. If you already use one, add summer activity pictures for events like swimming or visiting the park.

## Summer safety

During the summer, children are heading outdoors to play more often. It is not a coincidence that the season of warm weather and extended daylight is also the time of more broken bones and accidental injuries. Whether on a neighborhood playground or in your backyard, it's your job to ensure your child's safe during play.

### Outdoor play

- When you do head outside, be prepared and pack items like: water bottles, sun screen, bug spray, bandages, hats and sunglasses.
- It may be helpful to set a timer to remind you and your child to take water breaks and reapply sunscreen. Children with autism like to know what to expect, so it's helpful to give a 20, 10 and 5 minute warning before it's time to leave or come inside.
- Parks and playgrounds can be fun places to play and meet new friends. Check your area for barrier free parks that have fewer tripping hazards and fenced-in playgrounds. Atlanta Parent's\* website has a list of Atlanta area playgrounds that are accessible with adaptive equipment.

### Water play

- Summer also means more time in and around bodies of water. Remember that constant supervision is key—drowning can occur in just seconds.
- At least one parent or adult should be a designated water watcher at any given time. The water watcher is responsible for active and consistent monitoring of the water and swimmers. This constant vigilance can be tiring, so trade off this role as needed.
- Practice touch supervision—children aged 5 and younger, and children with special needs, should be within an arm's length from the water watcher.





## Wandering worries

A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that a third of school-age children with autism wander or bolt from adult supervision every year. Wandering is when someone has the urge or tendency to leave a person's care or a safe area. Common examples of wandering include leaving a classroom without permission and running from the house when family members aren't looking. Having a safety plan is always important, especially since incidents of wandering tend to increase when the weather gets warmer and families start to spend more time outside.

To prevent wandering:

- Secure your home—consider having a locksmith install locks out of your child's reach and having an alarm system installed.
- Use inexpensive, battery operated alarms to alert you when doors are opened.
- Place Stop Signs on doors that your child is not allowed to open. This will remind him not to open that door.
- Consider having your child wear a tracking device and/or an ID bracelet.

To help ensure that your child doesn't sustain an injury if he does wander:

- Teach your child to swim.
- Introduce your child to neighbors.
- Alert first responders about your child. Have an information sheet about your child prepared to share that includes your contact information and your child's: name, picture, description, sensory issues, medical concerns, dietary restrictions, communication needs, and places your child often wanders to.



## We need research volunteers

At Marcus Autism Center, we're committed to providing the best possible care for kids living with autism now and transforming the future of autism through research. We're always looking for participants for our research studies.

Visit [marcus.org/research](https://marcus.org/research) or call **404-785-7600** to learn more about our research program.

## Upcoming events at Marcus Autism Center

Visit [marcus.org/workshops](https://marcus.org/workshops) for more information about parent workshops, family activities and community events.