

# PLAN AHEAD... DAILY STRUCTURE AT HOME DELIVERS SUMMER FUN!



Actor portrayals.

## Combining fun and structure may just be the recipe for the best summer ever for the child with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Summertime is often a relaxed and unstructured time. But for a child with ADHD, a daily routine continues to be very important. You don't have to schedule every minute of the day; just find a summer routine that is both predictable and flexible. Here are some tips for creating routine and structuring this summer in a way that allows your child to still enjoy time off from school:

### Tip #1



#### Create summer routines and schedules

Plan weekly schedules with your child that include both planned activities and blocks of free time. Planned activities may include trips to the pool, swimming lessons, or summer camp. There are also more casual, open-ended activities, such as reading time, computer time, or play dates.

### Tip #2



#### Calendar out daily activities

- Use a large calendar to write down daily activities
- Include any camps, vacations, appointments, etc
- If you have a teen who is working, include his/her work schedule on the calendar
- Post the calendar in a central location so it is visible to the entire family
- Review the next day's schedule the night before
- Involve your child in the planning—your child may even want to cross out the days on a calendar counting down to a special planned activity, like a family outing to an amusement park or the first day of summer camp



### Tip #3



#### Inspire learning

Take into consideration things your child loves to do or that he/she is curious about. Encourage activities that spark creativity and inspire your child to learn new things. Arts and crafts projects, walking nature trails, and learning new skills are all good examples that can help children gain a sense of personal fulfillment and pride. Summer learning can also mean making time for tutoring or other learning activities to help maintain an academic routine. Academic continuity in the summer can help make it easier to restart school in the fall. You can make it more fun for your child by going to the book store or library and picking something that piques his/her interest as opposed to books dictated by the school's reading list.

### Tip #4



#### Set a bedtime

A set bedtime is important for the child with ADHD and should not go by the wayside because summer days are longer. Children with ADHD often have difficulty sticking to a regular bedtime, and it is important to encourage good sleep habits to avoid days where your child feels tired or overwhelmed. You may want to set a bedtime Sunday through Thursday and be more flexible on the weekends. Encourage downtime or quiet time before bed by reading with your child, or creating a ritual to share special moments from the day, helping transition from an active phase to a sleep phase.

### Tip #5



#### Consider staying on ADHD medicine or even trying a new medicine

Many parents or caregivers opt for a “medication vacation” during the summer to give their children a break from unwanted side effects and see how they fare without medicine when there are no academic pressures. But ADHD doesn't take a vacation just because summer is here; inattention, impulsivity, and/or hyperactivity are likely still present with the same potential consequences that exist during the school year. Parents and caregivers may have more time to observe their children in the summer, so this can be an ideal opportunity to assess treatment options. Give your child time to acclimate to a new treatment plan, or continue to succeed on a plan that is already working well.

If your child does take a “medication vacation” during the summer, many clinicians recommend resuming their ADHD medicine 2 weeks prior to the school year to ensure they are prepared to perform at their best as soon as classes resume.