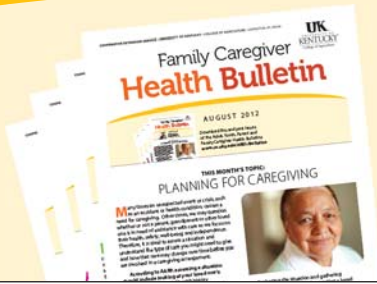


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



MAY 2013

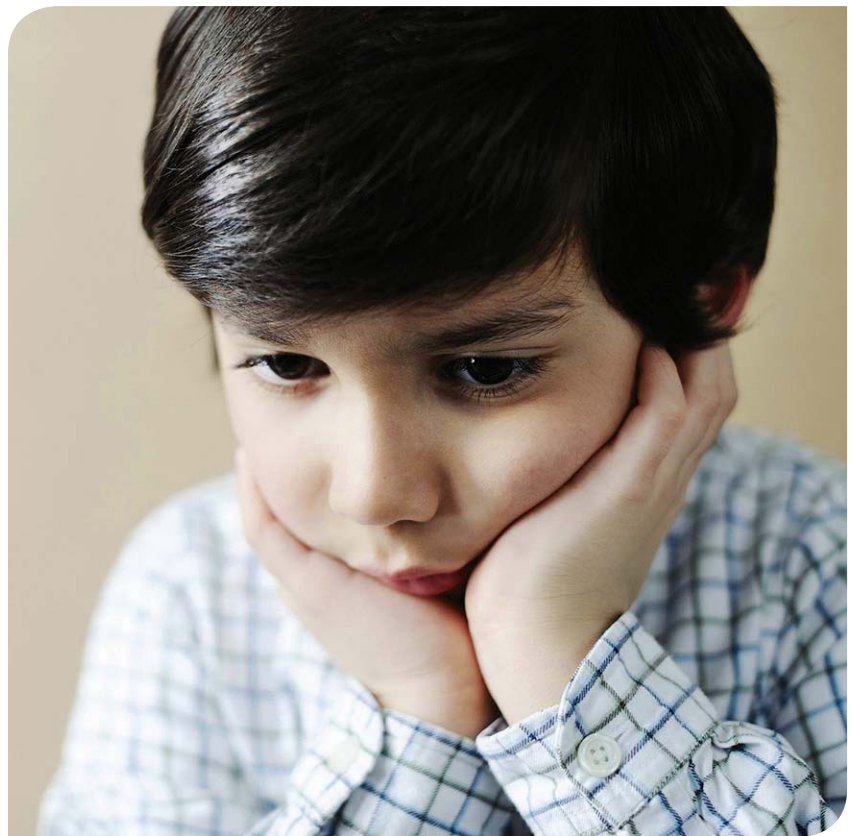
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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

CAREGIVING FOR A CHILD WITH AUTISM

The summer months are a time for children to enjoy the outdoors, attend summer school and travel with their families on vacation. It can be an especially challenging time to keep children with autism both physically and mentally active. Autism spectrum disorder is a general term for disorders of brain development often characterized by difficulties in social interaction, communication and repetitive behaviors. Some people may also experience intellectual disability, various physical health issues and trouble with motor coordination and attention. Others excel in music, math and art. The newsletter this month addresses autism and child development during the summer months and how to decrease the stress of traveling with a child with special needs.



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The summer months require a caregiving plan. One to two months before the summer break, it is important to schedule a talk with your child's teacher or counselor about on-going educational opportunities. The following questions can help with a summer caregiving plan:

- How might the child's development regress without some sort of routine, activity or schedule?
- What summer programs are offered through your local schools and community?
- What activities does the child enjoy; what will benefit them developmentally?
- Do you need to seek outside sources for additional therapy services the child might need?

In addition to trying to maintain a routine, summer travel can create added strain for any family. Traveling with an autistic child can compound the stress and even prevent a family from taking or planning a trip. The following tips can make travel preparation easier:

- Bring items such as favorite foods, familiar toys and cherished books that remind the child of their daily routine. If purchasing a new item, allow time prior to travel, for the child to become familiar with the item.
- Create a travel picture book or wordbook which shows transportation used during the trip, where the family will be staying and activities they will be doing. Go over this with the child before the trip, so they are familiar with the trip's itinerary. Taking the book on the trip will allow the child to know what to anticipate each day.

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- Start off small. The best preparation for a longer journey is to take short day and overnight trips. This allows the child to slowly adjust to the changes and challenges that a big vacation might create.
- Prepare individuals with whom you might come into contact during the trip. For example, inform the airlines that you will be flying with a child with special needs. Airlines often allow you to preboard so that you can get your children adjusted without a large crowd of people trying to board at the same time.

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Health Bulletin

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