

Safety in Public Places

American children get lost over 2,000 times each day in all kinds of public places such as beaches, amusement parks, fairs and airports. Use these tips to help prevent getting separated from your child in a public place:

1. Dress your child in bright colors.

Buy bright shirts, hats, and bathing suits to make children easier to spot in a crowd. Neon colors stand out more than muted tones. Rehearse with your children what YOU are wearing. Make sure your kids could spot you in a crowd and also tell someone else if they're asked.

2. Prepare identification for your child.

Write their name, DOB, allergies and medical conditions (if any). It should have your mobile phone number, and any other adults traveling with you. If you are staying at a hotel, add a business card of the hotel. Put it **INSIDE** of your kid's clothes, hidden. It could just be written on a piece of paper and put it into their pockets. Let your kids know it is there.

Many local law enforcement agencies offer child ID programs that provide you with a card containing your child's name, biographical information (including date of birth, gender, height, weight, hair color, eye color, and other identifying data), and a fingerprint image of both index fingers. The card can be made in just a few minutes and can be easily carried in a wallet or pocketbook.

3. Develop a 'what if' protocol.

Before reaching your destination, discuss what each family member should do if separated from the group. Tell kids whose help they should seek such as a lifeguard, police officer, an employee, or a mom with children. Arrange a meeting point if your kids are old enough to find a pre-determined landmark on their own, or instruct them to stay put if they're young. Teach them not to reach out to men or women that are walking alone and never

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believe a stranger's offer to take them to you. They should remain at the designated meeting place at all times.

4. Have a recent digital photo of your child on your smart phone or camera. Better yet, take your child's picture on the morning of your outing, wearing that day's outfit.

5. If you're traveling in a large group, assign one adult to watch each child at all times.

If the assigned adult needs a moment away, he or she has to 'tag' another adult to take over watching their assigned child. Make sure all adults know their role and keep each one in check. Don't assume another adult is watching the kids when you need to go do something, always ask. If you are not sure where one of the kids is, ask the other person. Likewise if someone asks you a child's whereabouts, only answer if you are SURE you know where the child is. Be vigilant. This greatly minimizes the risk of assuming the child is with the other person.

6. Act Immediately

If your child is lost, act immediately but don't panic. Try to stay focused on finding your child; send someone to the meeting place while the others alert the authorities and search. Trust that your child knows what to do and make the most of your efforts by staying focused.