

## Planes, Trains and Automobiles: Tips for Parents Traveling with Children

By: Jane Hoekelman, CPNP, Esse Health Creve Coeur Pediatrics

As summer approaches many families are planning vacations away from St. Louis. Each potential mode of transportation presents its challenges and rewards. Consideration of some tips will help ease the stress and promote the fun of a family vacation.

### Airplane Travel

Getting through security may be scary to young children. Arrive early to allow for the extra time it may take. Talk to children in advance to explain each step of the process. Dress them in easy-to-remove shoes and outer wear. Reassure them that their special carry on items will be returned to them after going through X-ray or inspection. Older children should be reminded that making any threatening comments or jokes is against the law and could result in fines or significant travel delay for the entire family.

- Formula or breast milk in containers must be declared for inspection at the security checkpoint. The officers may ask parents to open the container but you or your child will not be asked to taste or test the contents. Liquid or gel teethingers, and canned, jarred or processed baby food can be packed in carry on luggage.
- The FAA allows children under age 2 to be held on an adult's lap during flight. However the FAA and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) strongly recommend that, when feasible, each child has his or her own seat. Children should be secured in an approved child restraint system until the child weighs more than 40 lbs and can use the aircraft safety belt. Check the FAA website for additional information about approved safety seats.

### International Travel

- If traveling to a foreign country, check the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website about vaccine



recommendations and disease prevention. Carry a copy of your child's vaccine record with you

- Because of concerns about illegal transport of children across international borders, if only one parent is traveling with the child he or she may need to carry relevant custody papers or a notarized permission statement from the other parent.
- Certain medications - especially controlled substances - are not permitted in certain countries. Contact the embassy or consulate of the destination country.

### Car Travel

- Always use a car safety seat for infants and young children and insist that older children follow the recommended guidelines for seat belt use. **The AAP now recommends that "children remain in rear-facing seats until age 2, or until they reach the maximum height and weight for their seat. It also advises that most children will need to ride in a belt-positioning booster until they have reached 4 feet 9 inches tall and are between 8 and 12 years of age. Children should ride in the rear of the vehicle until they are 13 years old."** Parents should set a good example by always wearing a seat belt in the car.

- Most car rental companies can arrange for car seats if you are unable to bring your own.
- Help keep your child occupied during the trip with a variety of toys, audio books and music or video entertainment. The whole family can enjoy classic car activities like playing “I Spy” and sing-along songs.
- Know your child’s limits and plan to stop driving every few hours to get out of the car for a break at a kid-friendly area.
- **NEVER leave your child alone in a car, even for a minute.**

### Train Travel

- Child safety seats are allowed on trains if you reserve a seat; however, there are no safety belts to secure the seat. If possible try to get seats facing each other so you can put your child in the seat across from you.
- Never let children near the train wheels, as the train could move at any time.

### General Tips

- Each infant or child should carry identifying information and contact numbers in his or her clothing in case family members get separated.
- Consider packing a travel health kit, which includes basic first aid items, antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol based hand sanitizer, powdered rehydration packets such as Pedialyte in case of diarrhea illness, bottled water, a thermometer, pain or fever medication, bug repellent and sunscreen.
- Prescription medication should be packed in original containers. Additional items may vary depending on the destination. For further information refer to the CDC website.
- If staying in a hotel, check the room for potential hazards upon arrival. Bring plastic plug guards for the outlets, tie up drapery cords to prevent strangulation and consider taping the bathroom door lock to prevent your child from accidentally locking him/herself in the bathroom. If using a hotel crib, make sure it conforms to the most recent safety standards.

Martin and John Candy in the movie “Planes, Trains and Automobiles.” Instead, everyone will arrive home safely, rested and full of fond memories of the time spent together.

For more information about Esse Health, please visit us on-line at [www.essehealth.com](http://www.essehealth.com).

Jane Hoekelman is a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at:

Esse Health Creve Coeur Pediatrics Office  
11630 Studt Ave., Suite 200  
Creve Coeur, MO 63141  
Phone: (314) 567-7337

Traveling with children of any age can be a challenge. With a bit of forethought and planning, along with a little luck, families can avoid the mishaps of Steve