

Camper Guide

August 2025



LETTER TO CAMPERS & FAMILIES



Dear Camper,

Welcome to Arthritis Society Canada's Ontario Camp, a place where you don't have to explain what it's like to live with a rheumatic disease. Where everyone understands. And where you will have the opportunity to meet new friends, take your medicine in a supportive environment, sing songs around the campfire, and have the best week ever!

Arthritis Society Canada believes that having a rheumatic disease should not prevent you from being able to experience the unforgettable memories that a week at summer camp brings. Camp Ontario is all about having the time of your life with 90 new friends, while just being a kid at camp. We are thrilled to have you as part of our camp family!

This Camp Guide is designed to provide an overview of Arthritis Society Canada's camp experience, such as packing lists, policies, camper care, and more! The intent of this guide is to offer a clear picture of what to expect at camp.

Please note: It is perfectly normal for you to feel anxious and nervous about attending camp (it's also completely normal for your parents to feel anxious too). We hope that this guide will ease any feelings of worry. If you have any questions or concerns after reading through the following information, please do not hesitate to contact camp@arthritis.ca or call (647) 730-9026 ext. 3384.

Warm regards,

Jessica Caldwell (she/her pronouns)
Manager, Childhood Arthritis Programming
Arthritis Society Canada

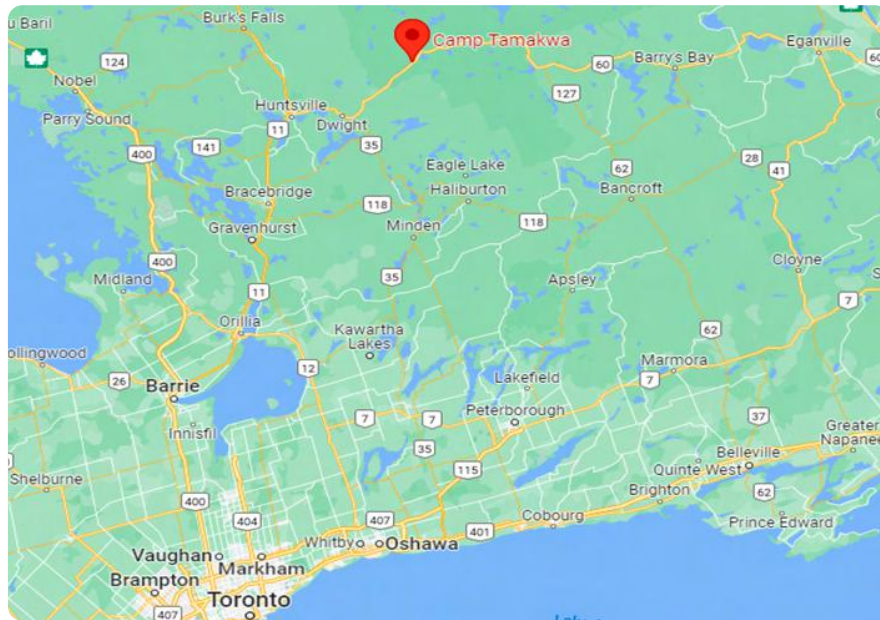


LOCATION



Camp Ontario is hosted at Camp Tamakwa, in the scenic Algonquin Park. Founded in 1936 Camp Tamakwa is a playground of endless forests and crystal-clear lakes. A place with countless outdoor activities, a community of soon-to-be lifelong friends and a place where kids are encouraged to learn, play and grow.

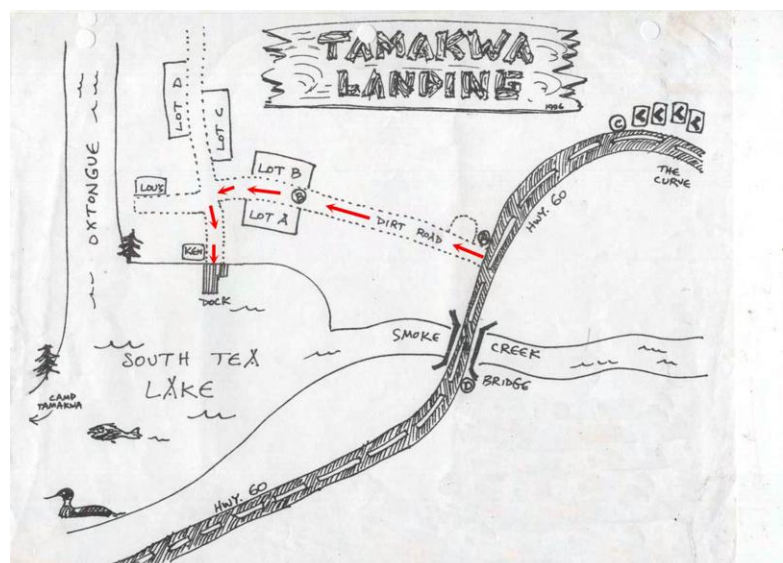
For 5 days each summer, Camp Tamakwa offers its space to Arthritis Society Canada to put on an amazing week of camp for kids with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases.



Camp Tamakwa in Algonquin Park, ON POA 1B0

Directions to Camp

Camp Tamakwa is located just past Kilometer 12 in Algonquin park, the turn off from highway 60 to the road is on the left-hand side right after you cross the bridge (if you are travelling north-east)! There's a Camp Tamakwa sign at the turn off. I've attached a hand drawn map of the turnoff to camp.



LOCATION & ACTIVITIES



Ahoy Matey!

Please note that camp is boat access only. Campers cross Tea Lake in traditional boats, like the red one in the photo. Parents, please make sure to prepare your camper for the boat, especially if they feel nervous aboard boats!



Cabins

Many cabins offer bunk beds like those shown in the photo. Some cabins are single bed only. Campers who require a bottom bunk will be accommodated. If your camper requires a bottom bunk and you have NOT already shared this information in their registration forms, please email camp@arthritis.ca.

Activities

Below is a list of some of the wonderful programming that camp has to offer:

- Canoe & kayaking
- *Swimming
- Wind surfing
- Land sports (e.g., tennis, basketball, etc.)
- Arts and crafts
- Climbing wall
- Zip-lining
- Archery
- and MORE!

*Supervised swim test in the lake on day #1



OUR VOLUNTEERS



Camp Volunteers

The heart of the camp – that's the best way to describe our wonderful volunteers. Every year, Arthritis Society Canada recruits, screens and trains volunteers from all over Ontario to create a magical week for our campers. Our volunteers include camp counsellors, bus registrant volunteers, and medical team members.

Arthritis Society Canada aims to create a safe and healthy experience for each camper and volunteer. We have designed mandatory training to ensure all volunteers feel comfortable in their positions at camp. This includes training from rheumatologists, social workers and occupational therapists on what it is like to live with childhood arthritis. Many of our volunteers live with arthritis and create endless opportunities for campers to learn and relate to others living with arthritis.

Elective Leads

Our elective activities are run by Camp Tamakwa employees. These staff members go through an intensive training period, led by Camp Tamakwa at the start of their camp season, and all have the required certifications to lead our various electives, including lifeguarding, swimming instruction, boat-driving (pleasure craft operator), among others.





Check-In and Check-Out

All campers will arrive at Camp Ontario on Monday, August 18 and depart on Friday August 22, 2025. More details on bus transportation and the arrival and departure processes will be provided by email in July or August. Please expect an early morning drop-off on August 18 and an afternoon pick-up on the 22th.

Arthritis Society Canada provides bus transportation to and from Camp Ontario from four cities:

1. Toronto
2. London
3. Hamilton
4. Ottawa

We strongly encourage all families to opt into bus transportation. The road to the Camp Ontario's boat access site is one-way and there is limited parking on site. If bus transportation is not a viable option for you AND you have not indicated so in your camper's registration forms, please contact camp@arthritis.ca, as you can opt to drive your camper instead.

Please note: Changes to Drop Off and Pick Up locations cannot be made after August 1, 2025

Head Lice & Communicable Illnesses

Head lice and communicable illnesses are a common occurrence among children and spread rapidly. For this reason, we have a proactive head lice and communicable disease management protocol in place to prevent outbreaks. Please check your child for lice or nits before arriving to camp. Any child with lice, nits or a communicable illness will not be able to attend camp and the family must inform camp@arthritis.ca.



A TYPICAL DAY AT CAMP



Example Schedule

Our goal is to provide a balance of group activities, education and independence building programs. Activities will vary daily and are subject to weather. We value the opportunity for children to connect with others living with arthritis and for them to become leaders, advocates and champions!

7:30 AM	Wake up
8:00 AM	Breakfast & meds
9:00 AM	Cabin clean-up
10:00 AM	First period
11:00 AM	Second period
12:00 PM	Lunch & meds
1:00 PM	Rest period
2:15 PM	Third period
3:00 PM	Snack

3:25 PM	Fourth Period
4:20 PM	All camp swim/rest
5:45 PM	Dinner & meds
7:15 PM	Evening program
8:15 PM	Camp fire, snack & meds
9:00 PM	Bed times for younger campers
10:30 PM	Bed time for older campers

Golf carts are available to transport campers as needed



PACKING LIST



NOTE: Please limit your child's luggage to one carry-on, and two soft duffle bags.

Bedding, towels, and toiletries

- ☐ 1 flat and 1 fitted twin sheet set with warm blanket/comforter (single or cot size) or 1 fitted twin sheet with sleeping bag
- ☐ 1 pillow
- ☐ 2 towels (shower & swimming)
- ☐ 1 bottle shampoo, 1 bottle of conditioner, and 1 bottle of body wash
- ☐ 1 toothbrush, floss, and toothpaste
- ☐ 1 toiletry bag or bucket
- ☐ 1 hairbrush or comb
- ☐ 1 deodorant
- ☐ 1 bottle sunscreen (30 SPF minimum)
- ☐ 1 lip balm with sunscreen (30 SPF minimum)
- ☐ 1 bottle insect repellent (non-aerosol)
- ☐ Box feminine hygiene product (if applicable)
- ☐ Large laundry bag
- ☐ Reusable water bottle (MANDATORY)
- ☐ Box of Kleenex

Clothing & accessories

- ☐ 5 t-shirts
- ☐ 1 nice outfit for last night of camp (dress up)
- ☐ 2 sweatshirts or long-sleeved shirts
- ☐ 1 warm jacket
- ☐ 1 raincoat or poncho
- ☐ 3 pairs of pants
- ☐ 6 pairs of underwear
- ☐ 6 pairs of socks
- ☐ 2 bathing suits (camp appropriate)
- ☐ 2 pairs of pajamas
- ☐ 1 hat (MANDATORY)
- ☐ Sunglasses (MANDATORY)
- ☐ 1 pair of running shoes
- ☐ 1 pair of rain boots
- ☐ 1 flashlight



PACKING LIST



NOTE: Please limit your child's luggage to one carry-on, and two soft duffle bags.

Optional items

- ☐ Games (e.g. cards – nothing electronic)
- ☐ Reading material (books, comics)
- ☐ Baseball glove
- ☐ Battery-operated fan
- ☐ 1 stuffed animal
- ☐ Disposable camera
- ☐ Bathrobe
- ☐ Hand sanitizer and mask
- ☐ Pain management tools (e.g., heat/cold packs, TENS machine, etc.)
- ☐ 1 Journal and pen/pencil

Do NOT bring

- ✗ Items such as cash, candy, food, gum, pets, cell phones, electronic games, good jewelry or any other irreplaceable items should NOT be brought to camp.
- ✗ Clothing with inappropriate graphics or phrases.
- ✗ Prohibited items include, but aren't limited to, explosives, knives, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- ◉ Cost to replace and/or repair equipment or property destroyed will not be assumed by Arthritis Society Canada but by the parent or guardian of the child responsible.





Medical Care

Our medical staff team consists of a blend of nurses, an occupational therapist and registered social service worker/social worker. Whether your camper is newly diagnosed or is approaching adulthood, our medical staff team work tirelessly to ensure your camper will get the most out of the camp experience. The camp medical team is responsible for overseeing the holistic health care of the camp. These professionals are available 24-hours a day to care for the campers and staff and are an essential component of the Camp Ontario family. All medications (except puffers and epi-pens as indicated) are kept and administered by the camp nursing team. No medications are permitted in the cabins. All medication times are accommodated at camp. As such, it is imperative that we have updated medical & medication on file. If there have been any changes to your campers medical status or medication list please contact camp@arthritis.ca immediately. In the event of an injury or illness that needs further attention, the camper will be taken to a local hospital. If indicated, the camp medical team will also make recommendations to send campers home.

Health and Well-Being of Campers

Our medical team is on site to help manage your child's health and well-being throughout their time at camp. Any emotional, behavioral or medical issues that arise will be managed by the at-camp social worker(s) / social services worker(s), medical team, and camp lead. If your child needs to be sent home due to safety, behavioral or health concerns, you will be contacted to come pick up your child. Arthritis Society Canada cannot provide transportation home. If a child or teen experiences suicidal ideation or self-harm behaviours, parents or guardians will be contacted to immediately pick up the camper to ensure their safety.

Medicine and Treatment

Medications, including prescription and non-prescription drugs, PRN medications and vitamins MUST be in blister packages. This is MANDATORY so please plan ahead. Please only provide the proper dosage for the duration of the camp program. All medications will be collected at the bus site at the time of check-in or at camp upon arrival by camp volunteers. You will also be required to print out and bring an updated Arthritis Society Canada MAR to bus registration. Please do NOT pack medication in camper's luggage.

It is imperative that any updates, from the time of registration to your camper's medications, doses, administration time, are communicated with us prior to camp. Please contact camp@arthritis.ca to report any medication adjustments. This is a non-negotiable request. All parents/guardians are required to verify that their camper's medications are up-to-date at registration at drop off.

REMINDER: If your child requires an EpiPen please send three to camp. One stays with the child, the others (labeled) will be stored in the medical centre. If your child uses an inhaler, please send two to camp.

OUR POLICIES



Homesick Campers

Our counsellors are trained to recognize the symptoms associated with homesick campers. Efforts will be made to console campers and assist them in developing coping strategies. The following guidelines will be used to address homesick campers:

- Encouraged not to call home until 48 hours have passed
- If a camper is still homesick after two nights and reasonable efforts by camp staff have been exhausted, parents may be contacted to pick up their camper.

Arthritis Society Canada does not provide transportation home for homesick campers.

Food Services

Balanced meals are prepared and served by the food service staff for each meal. If your child has any special dietary needs that were indicated on their registration forms, these needs will be met at camp. If a camper refuses to eat for an extended period of time, the camper will be required to leave camp in order to ensure their health and safety.

Cabin Life

Cabin groups are arranged by age/grade/gender. We do our best to ensure all cabin-mates are within one year or grade of each other. Your camper is expected to maintain an acceptable level of manners, behaviour and attitude in their group to create a positive living environment

Overall Expectations

Campers are expected to participate in assigned activities, adhere to lights out/curfew and respect others. Failure to comply will result in dismissal from camp.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco

There will be no possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, illegal drugs or weapons before, during or after the camp experience while on camp grounds. Failure to comply will result in dismissal from camp.

Harassment and Bullying

As outlined in the Camper Code of Conduct that was signed during your registration process, all camp participants will refrain from any bullying, hazing, physical altercations, harassment or similar behavior. Failure to comply will result in dismissal from camp.

Visitors & Phone Calls

Once your child arrives at camp, they will begin the experience of making new friendships and participating in camp activities. Since the camp program is only a short time, we want your child to take advantage of every moment. Visits or phone calls from family members will take away from that experience and possibly lead to homesickness. If we need to speak with you during the camp program, we will contact you immediately.

OUR POLICIES



Bullying at Camp

At Camp Ontario, bullying is inexcusable, and we have a firm policy against all types of bullying.

Our camp philosophy is based on our mission statement to ensure that every camper has the opportunity to build friendships with peers who experience the same health challenges, learn about their disease, and discuss coping skills, enhance their self-confidence, gain a sense of independence, and have a TON of fun! We work as a team to ensure that campers gain self-confidence, make new friends, and go home with great memories. Unfortunately, bullying takes away from the camp experience.

Our leadership addresses all incidents of bullying seriously. Staff are trained to promote open communication with their volunteers and their campers so they feel comfortable alerting us to any problems during their camp experience and between camp seasons. If a camper bullies another camper, they will be asked to stop, and provided strategies to change their behaviour. If their behaviour does not change immediately, Arthritis Society Canada will ask the camper to leave the program. If this occurs, parents/guardians are responsible for picking up their camper from Camp Ontario.

Lost & Found

Unclaimed items will be kept at Arthritis Society Canada office in Toronto until one month past the end of the camp program. The items are then donated to charity.



Sun at Camp

At Camp Ontario, the safety of our campers is our first priority. As part of its ongoing risk management program, Camp Ontario has a sun safety policy to help protect our campers while enjoying time outside. We encourage parents to talk to campers about the risks of overexposure to sun and the importance of wearing sunscreen, hats and sunglasses.

Our volunteers will participate in training regarding sun safety before campers arrive. Campers will be expected to wear hats, apply sunscreen and drink water regularly. Please send sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) to camp with your camper so that they will be ready to reapply throughout the day.





UNPLUG AT CAMP

We have a strict “no cell phone” policy at Camp Ontario. This includes electronic devices with the capability to play games, videos, and/or connect to the internet, which are not permitted to camp even if these features are disabled.

Aside from the fact that cell phones are expensive and can get lost, or that the physical camp environment is not kind to such items, these items discourage the positive interactions in the bunk that are a big part of the camp experience. The “downtimes” at camp are a great opportunity for campers to shape the strong bonds and share their experience living with arthritis. Campers who are “tuned out” are missing out on this. Your understanding and support of this policy helps us ensure campers have an engaging summer camp experience. As such, we request that all cell phones stay at home. If your camper decides to bring their cell phone camp, it will be held in the camp office for the duration of the camp. Please note that our volunteer will post real-time updates of the bus ETA upon the return from camp in Arthritis Society Canada’s Childhood Arthritis Facebook Community group. If you have not already joined the group, please do so.

While we discourage the use of cell phones at camp, small, lightweight and inexpensive digital cameras are allowed, along with their chargers and preferably waterproof cases. Cameras that are large, bulky or with removable lenses are strongly discouraged. iPods or devices that store music ONLY are also acceptable. Camp Ontario and our host Camp Tamakwa are NOT responsible for damage/loss of devices or cameras at camp.

WHAT NOT TO BRING TO CAMP

The following items are not allowed at camp:

- Alcohol, drugs not prescribed to the camper, tobacco products, cannabis
- Knives, including camping or Swiss army knives
- Valuable or precious items
- Matches or lighters
- Food - Please note that Camp Tamakwa is located in Algonquin Park. To reduce the risk of attracting bugs or mice, please refrain from bring any food into the cabin.
- Non-medical electronic devices, with the exception of digital cameras.





CAMPER CODE OF CONDUCT

Our Camper Code of Conduct is our guide to ensure the enjoyment and safety of all campers! This document should have been previously read and signed by both parent/guardian and camper during the registration process. This document is **MANDATORY**, and it details specific behavioural expectations required to attend camp, including a list of our summer camp rules and disciplinary procedures. This guide ensures each camper has a fun, exciting and safe week at Camp Ontario! You can review this form on CampBrain or request a copy from camp@arthritis.ca. Please make sure to review this document with your camper ahead of the camp week.

ACTIVITY RELEASE AND CONSENT AGREEMENT

In order to attend Camp Ontario, it is mandatory for each camper family to sign the following documents:

- Arthritis Society Canada's Activity Release and Consent Agreement (completed with registration)
- Camp Tamakwa's Waiver and Release Form



Thank you to our wonderful donors! Because of donor support, camp is free.

YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS



AREP



Arthritis Society Canada provides a range of services for children and adults living with arthritis in Ontario through the Arthritis Education and Rehabilitation Program (AREP). Services that you can self-refer to include OT, PT, and Social Work.

CLUB SUNRISE



Club Sunrise is a free virtual club that connects Canadian children ages 5-17 living with arthritis and other rheumatic conditions. Club activities range from cooking classes, to scavenger hunts, to dance parties, to Parent Nights to everything in between.

BACKPACK PROGRAM



Launched in March 2013, the Backpack Program delivers a FREE backpack filled with information and tools to families of children ages 4-12 who have been newly diagnosed with arthritis, helping them lead healthier, more fulfilling lives. Ask your rheumatologist for a voucher.

PARENT NIGHT



Join Mireille and Debbie who, just like you, are parents of kids with rheumatic disease. Through quarterly, virtual Parent Nights they are creating a community of parents who “get it” and are able to support each other in a unique and invaluable way. ALL parents/guardians are welcome!

**Scan the QR Code
to learn more!**



CONTACT



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