

The Wellness Exchange

A Publication of



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Summer vacations are coming to an end, and students are preparing for the start of a new school year. Read on for some helpful health and safety information.

Summer vacations

It's Back to School Time!

Top 3 Causes of Missed School

Colds. If symptoms don't improve within a week, see your doctor to make sure your child doesn't have a bacterial infection in the lungs, sinuses or ears.

Stomach Flu. Gastroenteritis (stomach flu) can lead to dehydration, including excessive thirst, dry mouth, severe weakness or lethargy, nausea or vomiting.

Ear Infection. For most healthy kids over 6 months of age, ear infections often clear up without antibiotics. However, if your child has recurrent ear infections, your doctor may suggest antibiotics or ear tubes as a more permanent solution.

Remember, the single most important thing your child can do to prevent illness is to wash his or her hands thoroughly and frequently. Keep in mind that school-age children gradually become less prone to common illnesses and recover more quickly from the diseases they do catch.

Check-Ups and Immunizations

Vaccines reduce your child's risk of serious illness and give diseases fewer chances to take hold in a population. Misinformation about vaccines can make some parents decide not to immunize their children, putting them and others at a greater risk for illness. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any concerns or questions.

Failure to keep immunizations up to date could result in your child not being able to attend school. Each state has different vaccination requirements.

Healthy Sleep

Adequate sleep will boost your child's enthusiasm and energy, help your child learn more easily, and reduce many behavioral problems.

Generally, children between the ages of 6 and 9 need about 10 hours of sleep a night, while preteens need a little over 9 hours. Your child may require more sleep if he or she:

- ~ Has a short attention span, or is irritable or restless.
- ~ Has unusually low energy and activity levels.
- ~ Is more tearful, anxious, defensive or impatient than usual.

Keep these tips in mind:

- ~ Set a regular time for bed each night and stick to it.
- ~ Avoid feeding children big meals close to bedtime.
- ~ Avoid giving anything with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime.
- ~ Establish a calming bedtime routine.

You know your child's personal habits best, so with a little trial and error, you should succeed in finding a routine that works for everyone.

Travel to and from School

Tips for School Bus Riders

- ~ Do not play in the street while waiting for the bus.
- ~ Carry all loose belongings in a bag or backpack and never reach under the school bus to get anything that has rolled or fallen beneath it.
- ~ Line up facing the bus.
- ~ Move immediately onto the sidewalk and out of traffic after getting off the bus.
- ~ Wait for a signal from the bus driver before crossing the street.

Tips for Pedestrians or Bike Riders

- ~ Always travel with a buddy.
- ~ Wear reflective or bright colored clothing to increase visibility.
- ~ Respect traffic lights and street signs.
- ~ Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.

Tips for Car Drivers and Passengers

- ~ Make sure young children are in safety seats at all times, and that the seats have been properly installed.
- ~ All children under 13 years should ride in the rear seat of vehicles.
- ~ Many crashes involve teen drivers. Limit the number of teen passengers to prevent distraction. Do not let your teen drive while eating, drinking, or talking on a phone.



Backpack Safety

- ~ A backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of the student's body weight.
- ~ Use all compartments and pack heavy items closest to the center of the back.
- ~ Choose a pack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.
- ~ Always use both shoulder straps. Slung a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles and may increase curvature of the spine.

Beat The Heat

What You Should Know About Heat Stress



As the dog days of summer continue, keeping cool can become a health issue as well as a matter of comfort. Dangerously high temperatures can result in heat-related illnesses ranging from heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It is important to know how to prevent heat-related illnesses, how to recognize the signs, and the steps you can take to both avoid and treat heat emergencies while awaiting medical help.

The Signs & Symptoms

With heat exhaustion and stroke, the most susceptible among us are seniors, children, and people with chronic illnesses. However, everyone is at risk. The early symptoms of heat exhaustion can sneak up on us. Some people feel a bit light headed and weak and might have a touch of nausea. The serious problems develop when symptoms are ignored and additional fluids are not taken right away.

Staying Healthy In The Sun

Acclimate yourself to hot weather slowly by gradually spending longer periods of time in the heat, before returning to cooler shade. Full acclimation can take up to three weeks, so keep exposure to strong sunshine to a minimum.



Stay in the shade as much as possible, especially between 11am and 3pm, when the sun is at it's hottest.

Wear loose, lightweight clothes and a wide brimmed sunhat. Protect your eyes with sunglasses that provide UV protection. Avoid strenuous exercise in hot weather, and if you get hot walking around while sightseeing, cool off in the shade as soon as possible. Eat a light diet, and never, ever, fall asleep in the sun.

Drink Fluids

Although most of us know we should drink at least eight glasses of water a day, over half the population only drinks between one and four glasses daily. Thirst receptors are a poor judge of how much fluid you may need, and usually by

the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. Therefore, don't wait until you feel thirsty before drinking fluids. Try to drink fluids regularly throughout the day.



Dehydration is a common cause of tiredness, poor concentration, reduced alertness, recurrent headaches and mood changes. It can also lead to constipation, kidney stones, and even a blood clot, heart attack or stroke, as it increases the thickness and stickiness of blood.

High temperatures can quickly lead to dehydration, so drink plenty of water in summer months or when visiting hot climates. Avoid alcohol and excess caffeine as these are both diuretics and have a dehydrating effect.

Heat Emergencies

Signals of Heat Emergencies

•**Heat exhaustion:** Cool, moist, pale, or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and exhaustion. Body temperature will be near normal.

•**Heat stroke:** Hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Body temperature can be extreme, as high as 105 degrees F.

Treatment of Heat Emergencies

•**Heat cramps:** Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse.

•**Heat exhaustion:** Get the person out of the heat and into a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets. If the person is conscious, give cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Avoid liquids that contain alcohol or caffeine. Let the individual rest in a comfortable position, and watch carefully for changes in his or her condition.

•**Heat stroke:** Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation. Help is needed fast. **Call 9-1-1** or your local emergency number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body. Immerse the individual in a cool bath, or wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. Watch for signals of breathing problems. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can. If the victim refuses water or is vomiting or there are changes in the level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink.



Please note that the information contained herein should not be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition, and is provided for your information only.

For more information on heat stress and tips for staying cool, visit:

www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat or www.redcross.org