

As They Grow

An Early Learning Newsletter for Families of Preschool Children

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Learning for life

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SELF-DRESSING TEACHES INDEPENDENCE

Preschoolers are eager to learn dressing skills. They learn to take off clothes before they learn to put them on. Self-dressing should be encouraged when a child begins to show interest. However, the large and small motor skills involved must be learned one step at a time. Patience is important during this process.

To encourage interest in dressing, clothing should be easy to put on and take off. Self-dressing helps to develop independence, responsibility, and cooperation.

- ◆ Look for roomy shirts that slip on quickly. Pants, skirts, or shorts with elastic waistbands are good. Front openings are easier to handle than those down the back.



- ◆ Fasteners often cause problems. Self-gripping fasteners, large buttons, and zippers that don't come apart at the bottom are easiest for preschoolers to manage.



- ◆ If a dressing task is too difficult for the child to do completely, let him or her do one part. Pulling up a zipper or slipping a foot into a shoe can be the first step to learning a more complex task.
- ◆ Praise effort as well as accomplishment. Say, "Keep trying. You'll learn how soon."

Immunizations, Vaccines, and Shots...Oh my!

As part of the Public Immunization Record Access feature of the Department of Health and Family Services web site, parents and legal guardians can look up their child's immunization record in the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR). Many children in Wisconsin receive immunizations from more than one provider. Without access to a child's immunization information, it can be difficult to know which vaccine a child needs at any particular time.

Parents can now log onto the registry at <http://www.dhfs.wis.gov> (click on "Public Immunization Record Access") to check for immunization information. When the hyperlink is clicked a screen will appear that will require the parent to enter a first name, last name, birth date, and either a Social Security or Medicaid number. If the child's immunization provider is using the registry and has entered the child's Social Security number or Medicaid ID, the parent will be able to access the record.

Parents and caregivers often have questions about shots. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is an excellent source for current information about health related topics (<http://www.cdc.gov/>).

Why do children need so many shots? According to the CDC, scientists have developed vaccines against more diseases, and we give them to our children to protect them from those diseases. Children don't get smallpox vaccine any more because we have eradicated the disease. More combination vaccines may also reduce the number of shots children will need. At the same time, vaccines may be developed to protect us against even more diseases.

Why are vaccines given at such an early age? Vaccines are given at an early age because the diseases they prevent can strike at an early age. Some diseases are far more serious or common

among infants or young children. The ages at which vaccines are recommended are not arbitrary. They are chosen to give children the earliest and best protection against disease.

How safe are vaccines? According to the CDC, they are very safe. But like any medicine, they are not perfect. They can cause reactions. Usually these are mild, like a sore arm or slight fever. Serious reactions are very uncommon. Your healthcare provider will discuss risks with you before your child gets each vaccine, and will give you a form called a Vaccine Information Statement, which describes the vaccine's benefits and risks. Vaccines are much safer than the diseases they prevent.

Do vaccines always work? Vaccines work most of the time, but not always. Most childhood vaccinations work between 90% -100% of the time. Sometimes, though, a child may not respond to certain vaccines, for reasons that aren't entirely understood. This is one reason why it is important for all children to be immunized. A child who does not respond to a vaccine depends on the immunity of others around her for protection. If a child is immune to measles, he can't pass the disease along to your child who failed to respond to measles vaccine. But if my child never got the vaccine, he can not only get measles himself, he can pass it along to others who are not immune.



What are my child's chances of being exposed to one of these diseases? Overall, quite low. Some of these diseases have become very rare in the United States, so the chances of exposure are low. Others, such as varicella (chicken pox) and pertussis (whooping cough), are still relatively common.


If you have questions or concerns about vaccinations, please schedule an appointment with your physician. Together, you can ensure that your child's health care needs are being met. Remember to ask questions if you do not understand something, and it is alright to ask to have something repeated or written down.

Children and the Flu Vaccine

CDC recommends that healthy children aged 6 months up through their 5th birthday, their close contacts (people who live with them), and out-of-home caregivers (nannies, daycare providers, etc.) should get a flu vaccine. This expands last year's recommendation to *now include* vaccination for children two years up to five years this flu season.

In addition, CDC also recommends influenza vaccination for any child from 6 months to 18 years of age with chronic health problems, including:

- asthma or other problems of the lungs
- chronic kidney disease
- HIV/AIDS
- sickle cell anemia
- immune suppression
- heart disease
- diabetes
- long-term aspirin therapy
- or any condition that can compromise respiratory function.

 Children under 6 months old can also get very sick from the flu, but they are too young to get a flu vaccine. The best way to protect young children is to make sure that their household members and their caregivers are vaccinated.

It is estimated that each year in the U.S., there are more than 20,000 children less than 5 years old hospitalized due to flu. Children 2-4 years old are likely to be taken to a doctor, an urgent care center, or the emergency room because of flu.

The best time to get vaccinated is October or November. Children 6 months to 9 years of age getting a flu shot for the first time will need two doses of vaccine the first year they are vaccinated, with the first dose ideally in September. The second dose should be given 28 or more days after the first dose. The first dose “primes” the immune system; the second dose provides immune protection. Keep this in mind if your child needs the two doses — begin the process early! It usually takes about two weeks after the second dose for protection to begin.

Because flu viruses change every year, the vaccine is updated annually. So even if you or your children got a flu shot last year, you both still need to get a flu shot this season to be protected. If October and November slip by, and you haven't gotten your children or yourself vaccinated, you should get vaccinated in December or later. Flu season can occur anytime from November through April, so getting the vaccine in January or later still offers protection in most years.

Fever, Colds, Sore Throats, and Coughs

Your child may not want to eat much when sick, so this may be the time to go along with the child's requests. Encourage your child to drink as much water as they are willing to drink. Children often favor light, soothing foods when sick. Yogurt, applesauce, soup or toast are nutritious choices.

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When a child has a sore throat, foods that are warm or cold may feel soothing. Some children will favor warm soups, warm apple juice, or hot cocoa. Other children like cold foods, such as fruit juice, popsicles, milk shakes, or frozen yogurt.

It is especially important that a child with a fever receive foods and liquids to fight the illness and to replace water lost through perspiration. Some children may not be very hungry but will want to drink liquids. Water and fruit juices are the best choices. Smooth foods such as ice cream, puddings, and milk shakes or bland foods such as toast, cereal, and soups are good choices because they are nourishing and easy to swallow.

Fast Food Control

Fast food is a great convenience for busy parents, but a poorly chosen meal at a fast food restaurant can have all the calories that you and your child would need for an entire day!

How can you make better choices for yourself and your children at fast food restaurants? Newer choices are becoming available at fast food restaurants. Some are offering children's menus with a choice between fruit or fries. Others have expanded their menus to include yogurt and fruit as well as salads. It is often recommended not to buy the children's meal. Instead, pick items like sandwiches and salads. Consider starting with a shared salad and having other menu items afterwards. Offer to share a portion of fries with your children so that they can enjoy them at a more reasonable portion size. Children don't need all the extra sugar in soda. Pass on the soda and order milk, juice, or water instead.



Portion Size

Nutritionists tell us we have an obesity epidemic in our country. One of the problems is an unrealistic idea of appropriate portion size. Many restaurants are offering larger portion sizes or "super-sized" portions.

Most Americans serve children portion sizes that are too large. This can be overwhelming and can cause overeating. For children under the age of five, a rough portion size is a tablespoons per year of age. For example, a portion of peas for a one-year-old is one tablespoon. Start with a small plate for your child and offer small portions of each of the foods that are being served. This gives you a chance to save the leftovers and can help your child get used to a new food without so much waste.

When a child has a favorite food at your meal, offer it in a reasonable portion size, and make sure you offer other foods as well. Sometimes we accidentally encourage children to eat only a limited number of foods by offering their favorites in large portion sizes, which reduces their appetite for and willingness to try other foods.

UW-EXTENSION WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- ◇ **Practical Guidelines for System Responses — Responding Effectively to Victims of Family Violence.**
Wed., Jan. 17, 6:15-8:15 p.m. — Ives Grove Office Complex, 14200 Wash. Ave., Sturtevant — or —
Wed., Jan., 24, 6:15-8:15 p.m. — YWCA, 740 College Avenue. The Racine County Family Violence Community Coalition will provide best practices to community professionals who work with victims of family violence. To register, call **262-886-8460**. Questions? Contact Tina Ginner, 262-886-8492
- ◇ **Potty Training**
Wed., Feb. 21, 6:15-8:15 p.m. — Ives Grove Office Complex, 14200 Wash. Ave., Sturtevant
Learn the readiness signs for toilet training and how to help prepare children for this important step.
To register, call **262-886-8460**. Questions? Contact Barbara Stoffel-Emde, 262-833-8732.
- ◇ **Gender Issues: Young Children's Curiosity**
Wed., Mar. 21, 6:15-8:15 p.m. — Ives Grove Office Complex, 14200 Wash. Ave., Sturtevant
Learn how to answer young children's questions about gender issues and reproduction.
To register, call **262-886-8460**. Questions? Contact Barbara Stoffel-Emde, 262-833-8732.

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2006). Parents Guide to Childhood Immunizations.
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Wisconsin Immunization Registry <https://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/>

This newsletter is a publication of the University of Wisconsin-Extension Cooperative Extension.
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