

As They Grow

An Early Learning Newsletter for Families of Preschool Children

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Fun Exercises for Children

The Leg Hop



An adult sits on the floor with legs slightly apart. The child runs around the adult, jumping over each leg. Occasionally, the adult puts both legs together and the child jumps over both legs at once. The adult's legs can be raised slightly to vary the activity to keep the child's interest. Be sure to do this activity in an area free of obstruction!



Over and Under Game

An adult lies face-down on the floor while the child steps over the adult's legs (at the point where a step can be taken easily). Occasionally, the adult will push up on hands and feet to make a bridge



for the child to crawl under.

Backward and Forward Rolls

Make sure the child's chin is close to the chest and that weight rests on shoulders and not on the head. Practice on a sofa or cushions. To help develop strength in the abdominal area, keep knees close to chest.



Playground Equipment and Clothing

Clothing strings, loose clothing, and stringed items placed around the neck can catch on playground equipment and strangle children. The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has received reports of death when these items became caught on playground equipment, especially slides and swings. Items included strings on clothing (such as hoods and attached mittens), loose clothing (such as scarves and ponchos), and other items (such as jump ropes) placed around the neck. These items caught on open-ended hooks, gaps, and other parts of playground equipment.

- ◆ **Never dress children in loose or stringed clothing if they will be playing on playground equipment.**
- ◆ **Clothing strings, loose clothing, and stringed items placed around the neck can strangle a child.**

For more information on safety, contact CPSC at 1-800-638-2772 or visit www.cpsc.gov

Summer Activity Safety

Summertime activities also bring trips to hospital emergency rooms. Here are some tips to prevent injuries in children of all ages (and parents too)!

- **Eye Injuries:** In order to prevent eye injuries, it is very important that children's eyes be protected whenever possible. One prevention tool is a helmet when your child is using a bicycle, roller-skates, or other modes of wheeled entertainment. Also, use caution in sports situations like soccer, softball, or tennis, when balls can be kicked or hit into the face.

If your child sustains an eye injury and has blurry vision, pain, or if the eye looks irritated, take him to an ophthalmologist as soon as you can. If your child seems disoriented, has head or neck pain or slurred speech, he may have a concussion. **DO NOT MOVE YOUR CHILD.** Call 911 immediately. If your child seems okay, watch him closely for 72 hours and consult your pediatrician.

- **Cuts:** Childhood is filled with cuts and scrapes. Prevention is not always successful, especially during sports on wheels.

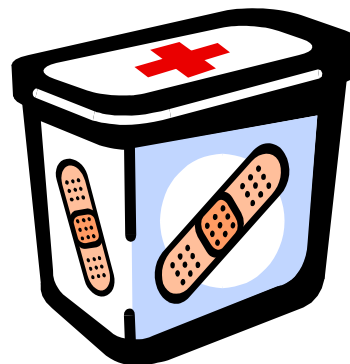
If your child has a cut or scrape, clean the injured area with soap and water. If the cut is deep and you are unable to control the bleeding, take your child to the emergency room or urgent care within 6-12 hours as your child may need stitches. Cuts may lead to a tetanus infection, so be sure that your child's tetanus immunization is up to date. Be sure to carry plenty of band-aids, gauze, and tape when you are a parent of a preschooler.

- **Ankle Sprain:** During sports, children can sustain an ankle sprain. If your child complains of a sore ankle, ice it, gently wrap it in an elastic bandage, and make an appointment with your pediatrician. Go to the emergency room if your child's ankle has significant swelling, is in pain when standing, or has trouble walking. The doctor may take X-rays to rule out a fracture.

The Fine Art of Making Mistakes

Most parents are very concerned about the fine art of parenting. Some of the mistakes they most often make are:

- **Failing to understand the natural stages of childhood.** Parents need to know what types of behavior are appropriate at different stages of a child's life. Without that understanding, they set up unrealistic expectations for children.
- **Not seeing a situation from the child's perspective.** A child's behavior often makes no sense from an adult point of view. But if parents put themselves in the child's shoes and see the concepts that the child is struggling to master, they will see more clearly exactly what is going on.
- **Treating parenting as a competitive sport.** It's natural to take pride in each child's accomplishments; walking, talking, etc. But feeling competitive about it is unfair to the child. Children develop at their own rates and pushing them will only frustrate both the parent and child.



- **Trying to protect children by hiding conflict.** You are not really protecting them (they will sense that something is wrong no matter what you do). And you are missing an opportunity to teach them how to deal with frustration and anger

and differences of opinion, which are a natural part of life.

Remember, no one is perfect. Not you and not your child.

The Overscheduled Child

A new phenomenon — overscheduled children — has come upon us in the last two decades. The picture of the carefree childhood with time for play and day dreaming is no longer the reality for many children. For some, childhood has become a rat race of hyper-scheduling, over-busyness, and loss of family time.

Research is showing significant changes in children and families' time. Partly as a consequence of children's new schedules, families spend less time interacting. Household conversations between parent and child-time for just talking and not doing anything else-nearly dropped off the radar screen. For the first time, family life revolves around children's optional activities rather than these activities revolving around the family.



The adult world of hyper-competition has invaded the family. But, is a good parent the one who is an opportunity provider in a competitive world? If so, parents may never know if they have done enough. Parenting has become a competitive sport, with trophies going to the busiest.

Therapist Ron Taffel interviewed preschoolers through sixth grade children. The one wish expressed by nearly every child was that their parents spend more time with them. Some of this lack of time comes from parents having to work more hours and more jobs. But, another factor is the over scheduling of children.

The University of Michigan study of children's time found that **more family meal time was the strongest predictor of better achievement scores and fewer behavioral problems.** Mealtime was far more powerful than time spent in school, studying, playing sports, or art activities.

As a parent of a young child, one of your roles will be to decide how much to commit to structured activities versus family time. The challenge will be to find a balance based on your individual family values. Decide what is most important to your family and stick to it!

CHILDREN EXPERIENCE DECLINE IN FREE TIME

A survey by the University of Michigan has documented the changes in children's free time. From 1981 to 1997, children ages 3-12 saw a major decline in free time including:

- ◆ Losing 12 hours per week in free time
- ◆ Dropping 25% in play activities
- ◆ Decreasing 50% in unstructured outdoor activities (walking, hiking, camping, etc.)
- ◆ Doubling their time in structured sports
- ◆ Having a five-fold increase in time spent in spectator sports
- ◆ Experiencing a 50% increase in homework time

As a parent of a preschooler, you may have noticed that there are many opportunities for structured activities including sports, play groups, library story times, dance, gymnastics, music lessons, etc. You may have considered enrolling your child in some of these activities. Now is a good time to consider what and how many structured activities you want for your child AND what your child can handle.

Teaching Positive Eating Behavior

Helping preschoolers learn healthy eating is a test even for adults with the most effective parenting skills. And when the rest of life is rushed and stressed, it may seem easiest just to force your little child to eat and thus correct bad behavior.

But hold off if you can. Research shows that children are more cooperative when you avoid focusing attention on bad behavior. In addition, preschoolers who tend to have erratic eating patterns from meal to meal still manage to get about the same number of calories from day-to-day without any prodding.



- ◆ **Give directions in a positive way that instructs.** "Don't eat that" is not as clear as telling the child when it's OK to eat it, or what would be better to eat and why.
- ◆ **Say yes whenever possible.** Instead of saying "No" when your child asks for a cookie, say "Yes, you may have one after lunch." The child will learn that his request is acceptable, but the timing is a little off.
- ◆ **Use consequences rather than punishment.** If after sitting through the meal the child has left food, quietly remove it without fuss. Soon your child will realize he'll have to wait until snack time for food.

UW-EXTENSION WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- ◇ **Managing Stress**
Wed., May 16, 6:15-8:15 p.m. — **Ives Grove Office Complex**, 14200 Wash. Ave., Sturtevant
This workshop will cover a variety of techniques to reduce stress, anxiety, anger and family conflict. Registry Barcodes available for Child Care Providers for \$5.00, payable the night of the seminar.
To register, call 262-886-8460 by May 8. Questions? Contact Barbara Stoffel-Emde, 262-833-8732.
- ◇ **Managing Challenging Behaviors**
Thurs., June 21, 5:45-7:45 p.m. — **Waterford Public Library**, 101 N. River St., Waterford — or —
Wed., June 27, 6:15-8:15 p.m. — **Racine Public Library**, 75 7th Street, Racine
You will learn specific techniques and strategies to manage children's challenging behaviors. Registry Barcodes available for Child Care Providers for \$5.00, payable the night of the seminar.
To register, call 262-886-8460 by June 18. Questions? Contact Tina Ginner, 262-886-8492.
- ◇ **Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome**
Tues., July 24, 6:15-8:15 p.m. — **Ives Grove Office Complex**, 14200 Wash. Ave., Sturtevant
This workshop is required for childcare providers and employees, who have contact with children under the age of five. Registry Barcodes available for Child Care Providers for \$5.00, payable the night of the seminar.
To register, call 262-886-8460 by July 18. Questions? Contact Barbara Stoffel-Emde, 262-833-8732.

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