

Bright Futures: Family Matters

Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face. ~ Victor Hugo



Season's Greetings!

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year - The winter holidays are upon us. No matter which seasonal celebrations you observe, here are some tips for keeping holiday fun at the top of your 'to do' lists and ensuring you and your family enjoy a happy, healthy holiday season.

Make a List and Check it Twice – Maximize your time and minimize stress by staying organized. Before you head out to the mall or grocery store, try to have a complete shopping list, and be sure it includes daily exercise. Instead of parking in front of the grocery store, park at the far end of the lot and take a brisk walk to the store. Use the stairs instead of the escalator, or take a lap around the mall before you start your holiday shopping. For more ideas about incorporating exercise into your daily activities, visit (English *en Español*) www.smallstep.gov/ga/take_small_steps_today.html#exercise.

Our Cheeks are Nice & Rosy & Comfy Cozy are We - Staying healthy is key to enjoying the holiday season. Make sure that rosy glow is due to the weather and not a fever from the cold or flu. Get a flu vaccine and get your children vaccinated too. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend yearly flu vaccines for children 6 months to 5 years old. Children 6 months to 18 years old who have special health care needs should have an annual flu vaccine. More information is available at www.cdc.gov/flu/parents/index.htm.

Soap and water are the most effective way to ward off colds and other illnesses. It's important to wash your hands before preparing food or eating, before cleaning an injury or applying band-aides, after handling pets or garbage, after using the bathroom or changing diapers, and after coughing or blowing your nose. Despite the prevalence of alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizers, old-fashioned soap and warm water are still the best choices. Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds and rinse thoroughly. Need a fun, interactive way to keep your children scrubbing? Sing a favorite holiday song or have them learn about hand washing from Henry the Hand, Champion Handwasher, at www.henrythehand.com/.

Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, Family Voices works to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. **Bright Futures: Family Matters** is a publication to share with your networks. Check out our Family Voices web sites at www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org and www.familyvoices.org.

Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire - Eating right is a basic ingredient for the holiday wellness recipe. In the rush of holiday preparations, it may seem convenient to grab fast food for dinner or eat snacks instead of sitting down to a meal. Find quick meal ideas in English *en Español* that can be made ahead, many in one pot, with 6 ingredients or less at www.mealsmatter.org/RecipesAndMeals/QuickMeals/index.aspx

Your holiday time together will be more enjoyable if your children get enough sleep. If possible, maintain your children's bedtime routines. Read more about the importance of sleep at www.aap.org/family/healthychildren/07school/HC-07School-Sleep.pdf.

No Place Like Home for the Holidays – If you will be traveling by car, read the safe winter driving checklist at www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/Seasonal_Advisories/WinterDrivingTips/images/safewinterdriving.pdf.

Baby, It's Cold Outside - If you'll be engaging in outdoor winter activities, it's important to dress in layers for maximum warmth and use the right sports equipment. Goggles and helmets are not the only safety gear children need. Just because it's winter doesn't mean you can't get sunburned, so use sun block. Read more winter safety tips at www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/decwintertips.htm.

For information about adaptive equipment (and much more) family members with disabilities might need to participate in winter sports, call the National Center on Physical Activity & Disability at 1-800-900-8086 or visit www.ncpad.org.

There'll be Parties for Hosting, Marshmallows for Toasting – Be realistic about what you can accomplish. For example, if you always host a holiday dinner and traditionally do all the cooking, consider asking your company to bring a dish to share. Everyone will enjoy the meal together, you won't be exhausted from all the preparation and your guests will have a chance to showcase their own holiday specialties.

'Tis the Season to be Jolly - Most importantly, have fun and enjoy this special time of the year. Brainstorm ideas for spending time together and do an activity the entire family enjoys. Take turns reading your favorite holiday stories aloud. Take photos and use them as decorations next year. And, remember to reach out to those in need. The holidays can be particularly stressful for individuals who are unable to be with loved ones or have no place to go. Include your single neighbor in your holiday plans. Many public service organizations welcome volunteers and charities need donations during the winter season. www.volunteermatch.org lets you search for opportunities in your area that match your interests and skills with places that need the unique help you can offer.

And may all your holiday's be bright!

Partners...



American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** is more than just a professional association for pediatricians. Their mission is to promote optimal physical, mental and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults. They do this by providing educational opportunities and resources for professionals and also by providing parenting and health information for families. For example, if you're curious about the different types of pediatric subspecialties and why your child might need more care than your pediatrician can provide, read the fact sheets posted in the Parenting Corner of the website. You'll also find information about a wide range of health topics – everything from acne to wheezing, searchable by both health topic and age. And, because the AAP recognizes the importance of parent/provider partnerships, there's a section about working with your pediatrician. The AAP is also home to **Bright Futures**. See www.brightfutures.aap.org for resources, contacts, and for information, including news about the **NEW Bright Futures Guidelines**.

The American Academy of Pediatrics
141 Northwest Point Boulevard
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098
Web: www.aap.org

Family Resource Corner

FAMILY VOICES®

2008 Calendar

In search of a holiday gift that's useful and supports a good cause? Visit www.familyvoices.org and check out the **Family Voices Calendar**, filled with memorable photos and inspirational quotes.

Is your child **AATK** (always at the keyboard)? Does he send a **911** (parent alert) or **PIR** (parent in room) when you enter? Even when the computer is in a well-trafficked room, kids can figure out how to code their messages to avoid parental supervision. Check that the chat rooms your child enters and texts she sends or receives are safe and not inappropriate or dangerous. Learn about chat acronyms and text messaging shorthand at <http://www.netlingo.com/>.

During this season of giving, make sure you don't give too personal a gift to a stranger – in the form of your identity. Do you and your children know how to protect yourselves from identity theft? Have your family take the engaging and informative **ID Theft Face Off** at <http://onguardonline.gov/idtheft.html>. **En Español** at <http://alertaenlinea.gov/index.html>.

For parents who want to instill a **love of reading** in their children but may struggle with their own literacy issues, there's a fabulous website with read-along stories & songs at www.rif.org/readingplanet/content/read_aloud_stories.msp (**English en Español**). And, if books are on someone's holiday wish list, you'll find lots of suggestions and poll results to see how kids rated the books.

Need a toy for someone special who has special needs? Visit <http://www.ableplay.org/> to search for and **learn about toys** for children with physical, communication, sensory or cognitive issues.



What's New in Research?



Are you so busy rushing about in preparation for the upcoming holiday season that you don't have time to chat with a neighbor, return a phone call from a relative, or visit with a friend? Are your kids so busy studying for mid-terms that they won't make time to eat dinner with you?

★ A University of Michigan study found that taking 10 minutes for these types of social interactions not only boosts memory and mental acuity, but may also improve emotional well-being. Researchers measured the number of minutes/week participants talked on the phone and met with others to see if there was a link between social interactions and mental function. Then they administered a mini-mental exam to each participant and found a correlation. Participants with higher numbers of social contacts had better cognitive function.



★ A second experiment found that individuals who engaged in 10 minutes of conversation before taking a test performed just as well as individuals who engaged in intellectual pursuits, like doing crossword puzzles, prior to taking the same test. So, the next time your student wants to forgo dinner in order to keep studying, remind her that joining the family for a meal is an effective study technique.

Read more at

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/10/071029172856.htm.

Tidbits for the Month



December is Safe Toys & Gifts Month



Many toys, even when manufactured to the most rigorous standards, can be dangerous when used inappropriately. In fact, 90% of toy-related eye injuries to children are preventable. For tips for choosing safe toys,

call Prevent Blindness America at 1-800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org/resources/factsheets/Toy_tips_MK05.PDF.

The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.cpsc.gov posts information (**English en Español**), about toy recalls. Kids can learn about consumer product safety at the "Especially for Kids" link.

New Year's Resolutions

2008 is just around the corner. If eating healthier and getting exercise is on your 'to do' list for the New Year, visit www.shapeup.org/fittips/20_tips.php (**English en Español**) for tips to get the whole family in tune with the benefits of being fit.

Share your news with others!

We love to hear from partner and family organizations and invite you to share news about your organization's programs and activities. To share your tidbits and/or subscribe to this publication email Betsy Anderson at banderson@familyvoices.org.

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