

eHouseCall

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A Monthly Electronic Newsletter from HealthLink

Doctor's Bag



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HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO
HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

SEPTEMBER

Back to School Tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics

The following health and safety tips are from the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org.

Backpack Safety

- ◆ Your child's backpack should have wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.
- ◆ The backpack should never weigh more than 10-20% of the student's body weight, and should be packed evenly.
- ◆ The child should use both shoulder straps or a rolling backpack to avoid strained muscles.

School Bus Safety

- ◆ If the school bus has lap/shoulder seat belts, the child should use them at all times when on the bus. (If the bus does not have seat belts, encourage the school to make this change.)
- ◆ The rider should wait for the bus to stop before approaching it.
- ◆ Passengers should stay seated and in clear view of the bus driver.

Bicycle Safety

- ◆ Helmets are a must, no matter how long or short the ride.
- ◆ Bicyclers should ride on the right (the same direction as auto traffic), use appropriate hand signals and respect traffic lights/stop signs.
- ◆ Have your child wear brightly colored clothing to increase visibility.



Team Sports Tips

Team sports are a great way to build character and strong bodies. Your child's coaches should provide the proper equipment and training but it's a good idea to remind your student to:

- ◆ Stretch before and after practices and games.
- ◆ Take advantage of rest periods to avoid injury and heat illness.
- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids.
- ◆ Follow the rules.
- ◆ Be a good sport.

That last tip goes for parents, too. You've probably seen news clips of parents who became over-emotional and abusive while "cheering on" a student at a sporting event. Keep in mind, there is a fine line between supportive and oppressive.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "The pressure to win can cause significant emotional stress for a child. Sadly, many coaches and parents consider winning the most important aspect of sports. Young athletes should be judged on effort, sportsmanship and hard work. They should be rewarded for trying hard and for improving their skills rather than punished or criticized for losing a game or competition."

Attending your child's sporting event is an important way to show your love and support. While you are there, conduct yourself in a manner that is enthusiastic, positive and mature. You will be setting a great example for your child.

Car Pool Safety

- ◆ All passengers should wear a seat belt and/or an age- and size-appropriate car safety seat.
- ◆ All children younger than age 13 should ride in the rear seat of vehicles.
- ◆ Many crashes occur while teen drivers are going to and from school. Limit the number of teen passengers to prevent driver distraction. Do not allow your teen to drive while eating, drinking or talking on the cell phone.

Walking to School

- ◆ Make sure your child's walk is a safe route with well-trained adult crossing guards at every intersection.
- ◆ Because small children may be impulsive and less cautious around traffic, consider whether or not your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.
- ◆ Brightly colored clothing will increase your child's visibility.

Eating During the School Day

- ◆ Most schools regularly send cafeteria menus home. With this advance information, you can plan on packing lunch on the days when the main course is one your child prefers not to eat – or one that does not meet your nutritional standards.
- ◆ Try to get your child's school to stock healthy choices such as fresh fruit, low-fat dairy products, water and 100% fruit juice in the vending machines.
- ◆ Each regular 12-ounce soft drink contains approximately 10 teaspoons of sugar and 150 calories. Drinking just one can of soda a day increases a child's risk of obesity by 60%. Do your best to restrict your child's soft drink consumption.

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