

A+ Parenting

Winter 2008

Dear Reader,

Happy 2008! On behalf of the Area VII CFS Extension Educators, we are pleased to offer you the A+ Parenting newsletter. In each issue we hope that you will find information, recipes, tips, etc. that will make your important role as a parent a little easier and more enjoyable. Our new format will be offered four times a year. As you read the upcoming issues if you have ideas, comments or suggestions please let your CFS Educator know and she will pass those ideas on to us.

Sincerely,

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“Beat the Winter Bugs– How to hold your own against colds and flu”.

With winter just starting be sure to :

- **Get the flu vaccine**– flu season runs from November to April. If you haven’t gotten the flu shot you can still get good results if you get it in January. The flu shot is not recommended for people who are allergic to eggs. The FluMist is for healthy children, adolescents ages 5 to 17 and healthy adults between the ages of 18-49.
- **Wash your hands** - do it often, with warm/hot water and soap. You need to scrub for at least 15 seconds, rinse and dry. As you teach your children the proper length of time to scrub – they can sing the ABC’s or “Happy Birthday”. Teach them to sneeze or cough into their shoulder, not their hands and to wash after they use the toilet, cough in their hand or blow their nose. Teach them to hold on to their paper towel as they leave public restrooms, using the towel to shut off the water and open the door.
- **Limit exposure to infected people** - avoid people who you know are sick– why risk getting sick? Keep infants away from crowds for the first few months of life. This is especially important for premature babies that have underdeveloped lungs or heart problems.
- **Practice healthy habits**– like eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep and exercising. This can help your immune system fight off those nasty germs and viruses. Cleaning your counters and door knobs with 1 part bleach with 10 parts water will help kill the viruses that are hanging around. Un-usual stress can increase the likelihood of getting sick.

If you do come down with a cold or flu make sure you:

- **Get plenty of fluids and rest** - water, juice, soup or non-caffeinated beverages will help loosen mucus and keep you hydrated. A cool mist humidifier may help relieve a stuffy nose.
- **Choose over the counter (OTC) medicines that fit the symptoms.** If in doubt talk with your pediatrician, family doctor or your pharmacist, making sure that you provide them with all the medications that are being taken.
- **Remember aspirin and aspirin containing medications are not to be given to children.** Children and teenagers suffering from flu like symptoms, chicken pox or other viral illnesses should not take aspirin . Make sure you share this information with your teenagers.
- **ALWAYS read the medication labels carefully and follow the directions.** It is a good habit to read the label each time you pick up the bottle to make sure you have the right medicine and are giving the proper dosage.
- **Be careful not to double up on ingredients** –make sure that you read the active ingredients on the labels and make sure that they have different ingredients.

Source: FDA Consumer

Manners and Etiquette

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: Good Manners....

: Don’t forget to have your children write thank you notes for all those wonderful gifts that they re-

: ceived from their many relatives and friends. A hand written note from your child will look favorably

: on your part and will teach your child the importance of acknowledging those gifts early on.

: If they cannot write yet, encourage them to draw a picture (which they should be able to do by age

: 2) and have the child dictate to you what they want to say. Once they can write, encourage them to

: aim for writing a couple of sentences to the giver, mentioning the gift (example, book, toy, etc.) and

: how they are enjoying it. If they received money as a gift, it is appropriate to let the giver know what

: they are planning to do with it, for example put it in their piggy bank or buy a new ball— mentioning

: the *amount* of money received is very poor manners. You can start the tradition of writing thank

: you notes at a very young age. This not only is good manners, but supports reading and writing.

: Here is a tip: save the front part of received cards and turn them into great postcards.

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What Is Play?

Play— have you watched your child playing a game and thought that he/she was “cheating”? They might be, but then again, they might not be. Here are Jean Piaget’s stages of play. Remember that these ages are only approximations— each child is an individual so the ages can vary up to 6 months on either side of the age.

Stage 1— the child is between the age of birth to two years old. This stage is called the sensorimotor . When children are playing at this age what are they doing the most— touching, feeling and tasting— uses their senses. So you need to create a world where they can touch, feel and taste without harming themselves. Repetition is part of their world, they love to do things over and over, especially dumping or knocking things over— however, they really don’t enjoy picking things up.

Stage 2 -2-7 years old— this stage is called preoperational and the children use symbols in their play. They do not need the actual thing— they can pretend that a banana is a telephone and their play is just as rich as if they actually had a phone.

Stage 3—7-11 years of age is the concrete operational stage and this is when games with rules begin to make sense to the children. Much before the age of 7, games with rules are difficult. When children play games before they reach the concrete operational stage, they tend to make up the rules as they go and they often change during and after the game.

So now what? - hopefully this will help you as a parent so you will understand what they are doing and why. Plus you will know not to ask a five year old to play Monopoly— instead, you will ask them to play a very simple game with few rules.

Source: *Play and Early Childhood Development*

Arts and Crafts

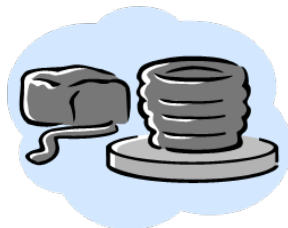
Look What I Made!

How thrilling it is for a child to create a piece of art—from the simple to the elaborate—and be able to share it with their family, friends, and teachers. Art and craft projects are not only fun and uplifting for children, but also help teach a variety of skills, such as following directions, measuring, cutting, gluing, sewing, and painting, just to name a few. Below are two easy projects from *FamilyFun* that you and your child can make together. Encourage creativity today!

Oatmeal Clay

What you will need:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour (plus extra for kneading)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- Food coloring (optional)



Directions:

Stir together all ingredients until a lump is formed. Note: If using food coloring, add to the water before mixing with the dry ingredients. On a floured flat surface, knead the dough until smooth and no longer as sticky. Form the clay into desired shapes (such as animals, flowers, letters, etc.) and allow to air-dry overnight. Leftover clay can be refrigerated for up to 3 days when placed in a sealed bag.

Pasta Snowflakes

What you will need:

- Dried pasta (various shapes, such as bow-tie, wagon wheels, etc.)
- Wax paper
- Glue
- Ribbon or string
- Toothpick



Directions:

On a piece of wax paper, arrange pasta into desired shapes and patterns. Dip the toothpick into the glue and glue all of the pieces together. After allowing time to completely dry, peel the wax paper away and attach a string or ribbon to hang your creation.

Source: <http://familyfun.go.com>

Q

What two things play a key role in helping your child grow, learn, build bone and muscle strength, maintain a healthy body weight, have more energy, a higher self esteem, and a greater attention span, as well as lower levels of illness, stress and anxiety?

A

You guessed it—proper nutrition and regular physical exercise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean meats, dairy, and whole grains, in order to provide the vitamins, minerals, protein, and fiber that our bodies need for optimal growth and health. The CDC also stresses the importance of staying active and recommends at least 60 minutes of activity most days of the week for children.

Family Matters Most

Newsflash to all parents—your attitudes and behaviors towards food and fitness influence your children more than you may realize. That’s why it is so important to be a positive role model for your children—let them see you eating *your* veggies and riding *your* bike. Using positive phrases and body language, such as “Yum! We’re having broccoli for dinner” or smiling and saying “Let’s go play catch” is a surefire way to get your kids excited about health—just remember to be sincere in your efforts.

Still not convinced that you play a powerful role in shaping your child’s health? Research shows that food preferences are formed at an early age and often continue into adulthood, so help your child get off to a healthy start by offering nutritious meals and snacks beginning at an early age. Think of it as planning for the future: by exposing your child to fruits and vegetables as a baby, you are upping the chance that he or she will be a pear or carrot-eating machine in the future.

Did you know that eating meals together as a family is not only a great way to stay connected, but also a great opportunity to focus on health? Serve up a well-rounded meal (½ the plate should fruits and vegetables and the other ½ should be protein and starch) and then go for a walk (or any other favorite activity) afterward.

Make health a family priority!

In the Kitchen

French fries are a favorite among children, but leave most parents (and dietitians) cringing just thinking of all the fat, calories, and salt. Why not introduce your children to sweet potato baked fries as a healthy and satisfying alternative? Sweet potatoes are loaded with vitamins A and C and are a good source of fiber. Involve your child by putting them in charge of creatively naming this tasty treat (Sweet Wonder Wedges, anyone?)

What you will need:

1 or 2 sweet potatoes
1 tbsp. of oil
¼ tsp. of your favorite seasoning such as: cinnamon, salt, cumin, red pepper, etc.
Baking sheet

Directions:

Pre-heat oven to 425°F. Wash and peel sweet potatoes. Cut into ½ inch-thick wedges or get creative cut into fun shapes. Place the cut potatoes in a bowl and add the oil and seasoning of your choice. Toss until all potatoes are covered and then arrange in a single-layer on a baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes, or until potatoes are cooked through and have crisp edges. Enjoy!

This month’s Focus on Fitness goal: “No T.V. Tuesdays and Thursdays”



By limiting the time your child is allowed to sit in front of a TV, computer, or video game screen, you are providing opportunity for more get-up-and-go activities like kicking around a soccer ball, playing hide-and-seek, or dancing to a favorite CD. Make it fun and no one will even realize what they’re doing—*exercising*.