



Important Medical Milestones

By Dr. Snehal Gandhi, Internist, Esse Health

June 2010

Doctors are often asked how to evaluate one's health status and how to prevent illness. This question in itself is simple but the answers can be more complex. With all the information and technology available, it is no wonder why patients can get so overwhelmed with all the recommendations.

There are recommendations for good habits and good lifestyle, recommendations to prevent cancer-related illnesses and recommendations to prevent certain infections, as well as certain metabolic diseases, such as high cholesterol and diabetes mellitus, to name a few. Most of these are based on the general population, but your doctor can make specific recommendations based on your individual needs.

Good habits and good lifestyle choices will probably go as far as anything medicine can offer. This probably is the single most important thing you can do overall in preventing illnesses.

Along with this comes a number of recommendations that can be helpful in preventing certain specific illnesses. This is based on what medical society calls a screening test, which is for people who have no additional risk factors or are considered at average risk or low risk.

Some cancers can be predicted and prevented. Colorectal cancer, among the leading causes of all cancers, is one such example. It is widespread to recommend a colorectal cancer screening done by a gastrointestinal specialist who performs a colonoscopy. A colonoscopy is usually recommended after the age of 50. If the results are found to be normal, the GI doctor recommends a repeat procedure every five or 10 years.

Breast cancer screening has long been scrutinized. There has been some controversy over what age is the best time to start screening. The current recommendation is to begin testing after the age of 50 by screening mammograms; however, it has

been widespread practice to test at the age of 40.

Pap smears for cervical cancer screening have significantly reduced the tragic effects of this disease. Pap smears typically are recommended based on your age. Until the age of 30, women should receive annual tests; after 30, the tests can be performed every one or three years, depending on the woman's risk profile.

Testing for diabetes mellitus has been recommended to be an annual test. This can be done a number of ways, most commonly a fasting blood glucose or an oral glucose tolerance test. Cholesterol testing has been recommended to be done between every one to five years, depending on your risk profile.

Vaccinations are determined based on your age. Your doctor can tell you whether you need tetanus, influenza, the H1N1 or a pneumococcal, among others.

Finally, a good general physical examination has been found to be helpful and influential in determining your present and future health status. Since no two people are identical, the recommendations a doctor may prescribe varies with each individual. The patient-physician relationship is critical and tantamount to healthy outcomes.

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Summer Safety Tips for Your Kids

By Dr. Joseph Schachter, Pediatrician, Esse Health

June 2010

Summer is officially here. For most children, this means more outdoor activities and with the 4th of July celebration, fireworks. For parents, this means being especially vigilant to keep your child safe and healthy. Here are some tips to keep your child safe this summer, provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

SUN PROTECTION

Babies under six months:

The two main recommendations from the AAP to prevent sunburn are to avoid sun exposure and dress infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts and brimmed hats that shade the neck to prevent sunburn. However, when adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least 15 SPF (sun protection factor) to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands. If an infant gets sunburn, apply cold compresses to the affected area.

For Young Children:

Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF should be at least 15 and protect against UVA and UVB rays.

For Older Children:

The first and best line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses and cotton clothing with a tight weave.

Stay in the shade whenever possible and limit sun exposure during the peak intensity hours-between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen – about one ounce per sitting for a young adult. Reapply sunscreen every two hours or after swimming or sweating.

HEAT STRESS IN EXERCISING CHILDREN

The intensity of activities that last 15 minutes or more should be reduced whenever high heat and humidity reach critical levels. Before prolonged physical activity, the child should be well-hydrated. During the activity, periodic drinking should be enforced; for example, every 20 minutes, 5 ounces of cold tap water or a flavored sports drink for a child weighing 90 pounds, and 9 ounces for an adolescent weighing 130 pounds, even if the child does not feel thirsty.

Clothing should be light-colored and lightweight and limited to one layer of absorbent material to facilitate evaporation of sweat. Sweat-saturated shirts should be replaced by dry clothing.

Practices and games played in the heat should be shortened and more frequent water/hydration breaks should be instituted.

POOL SAFETY

Install a fence at least four feet high around all four sides of the pool. The fence should not have openings or protrusion that a young child could use to get over, under or through. Never leave children alone, in or near the pool, even for a moment.

Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook –a long pole with a hook on the end - and life preserver) and a portable telephone near the pool.

Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give a child a false sense of security.

Children may not be developmentally ready for swim lessons until after the fourth birthday.

When infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."

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BUG SAFETY

Do not use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on your child. Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom. Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.

Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective against ticks, which can transmit Lyme Disease, and mosquitoes, which can transmit West Nile Virus and other viruses. The current CDC and AAP recommendation for children over two months of age is to use 30 percent DEET. DEET should not be used in children under two months of age. The concentration of DEET in products may range from less than 10 percent to more than 30 percent. Ten percent DEET only protects for about 30 minutes – inadequate for most outings. Children should wash off repellents when back indoors.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Do not push your child to ride a two-wheeler until he or she is ready, at about five or six years old. Take your child with you when you shop for the bike, so that he or she can try it out. The value of a properly fitting bike far outweighs the value of surprising your child with a new one. Buy a bike that is the right size, not one your child has to grow into. Oversized bikes are especially dangerous.

Your child needs to wear a helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short or how close to home. Many accidents occur in driveways, on sidewalks and on bike paths. Children learn best by observing you. Whenever you ride, put on your helmet.

When purchasing a helmet, look for a label or sticker that says the helmet meets the CPSC safety standard. A helmet should be worn so that it is level on the head, not tipped forwards or backwards. The strap should be securely fastened.

SKATEBOARD AND SCOOTER SAFETY

Children should never ride skateboards or scooters in or near traffic. All skateboarders and scooter-

riders should wear a helmet and other protective gear; wrist guards are particularly important.

FIREWORKS SAFETY

Fireworks can result in severe burns, scars and disfigurement that can last a lifetime. Fireworks that are often thought to be safe, such as sparklers, can reach temperatures above 1000 degrees Fahrenheit and can burn users and bystanders. Families should attend community fireworks displays run by professionals rather than using fireworks at home.

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Esse Health e-Newsletter Article

Teach Your Children Well: The Food Revolution

By Dr. Kristen Terrill, Pediatrician, Esse Health

Sometimes we are too tired. Sometimes we are too busy. Sometimes we just don't want to fight. The busy world we live in can make it difficult to provide healthy eating options and opportunities for exercise, let alone model these behaviors for our children. This scenario has played out around our country creating the first generation in history with a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

Inspired to help our children, First Lady Michelle Obama has spearheaded a national obesity initiative called Let's Move. The ideas are simple: get kids started off on the right foot with early exposure to healthy foods, exercise and decreased screen time. The Let's Move campaign also aims to improve school lunches and overall access to healthy food; and incorporate physical activity in our communities. Recently, the White House Task Force released a more detailed approach on how to accomplish these goals.

As with most things in life, this is easier said than done. We could talk to our children about calories, fruits and vegetables, and specific exercises, but we would run the risk of missing the bigger picture. This revolution sweeping our country cannot be successful without reframing why we eat. We need to teach our children that we eat food to fuel our bodies. Currently, most of us eat for all the wrong reasons. We eat because it is time to eat. We eat because we are celebrating. We eat because we are sad. We eat because the commercial made it look so good. You get the point. Most kids and adults in our country cannot identify the feeling of hunger. We need to teach our children that eating healthy will allow them to stay well and have energy to play, run, think and have fun! Putting eating back into the context of daily bodily maintenance is a healthy framework in which to place the remaining pieces.

So, beginning today, you can teach your children three main principles to help them fight obesity.

- 1) Teach your children to ask themselves, "Am I hungry?" before eating. Our goal is to help them develop a healthy lifelong relationship with food and this should be at the foundation. Teach them that sometimes their bodies will need foods that they don't think taste good. Again, eating isn't always about food tasting good. Also, refrain from trying to get them to eat a certain amount of food. They need to learn to listen to and trust their bodies' messages. Empower them.
- 2) Teach your children moderation. Help them understand that their bodies need a variety of foods to thrive. Do not eliminate their favorite unhealthy foods,

but simply teach them to either have smaller portions or less frequent options. This will eliminate the development of cravings for the forbidden foods. For example, if your son usually has Doritos with his sandwich at lunch; give him half Doritos and half baked Doritos. Slowly transition to all baked Doritos. Then give him a half portion and substitute a rice cake.

- 3) Teach your children that the choice is not to exercise or not exercise, but which exercise to choose. Your children should be moving their bodies for a least an hour per day. Keep it fun! Explore new activities together like hiking, rock climbing, trampoline jumping or skating. Or keep it in your own backyard with hopscotch, hula hoop, and slip and slide. It doesn't matter which activity they choose. Remember, the goal is for them to develop a lifelong relationship with exercise. A relationship so strong that they will not question whether they should exercise every day.

Fighting obesity is truly a revolution. It will require change, hard work and determination. Sounds a lot like parenting, huh? Your job is to teach your children to develop a lifelong healthy relationship with food and exercise. Teach your children well.

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