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IT'S NATIONAL POISON-PREVENTION MONTH

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Take Steps Now to Protect Your Family

Young children can be susceptible to poisoning from common household items often left within easy reach, says Kathleen Delaney, M.D., a toxicology specialist at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

"One thing we see is children who take medications that are in the day-of-the-week pillboxes, often in grandparents' homes," Delaney says. "The pillboxes need to be out of reach or locked away."

Parents and caregivers also should ensure that, after social gatherings, any remaining cigarettes or alcoholic drinks are cleared away. Both can be toxic to children.

Delaney says mouthwashes often contain alcohol and need to be removed from children's reach or put in cabinets with child-safety locks, just like medicines and household cleaners.

"If a child ingests any foreign substance or medication, the best thing is to do is call a poison control center immediately," Delaney advises. The national poison control hotline number is 800.222.1222. Calling this number will automatically connect you to a poison-control center in your area.

Visit www.HealthMart.com to learn more about protecting your family from common household poisons.



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ABOUT BIRTHMARKS

When Should Parents Be Concerned?

Although most birthmarks are harmless, a doctor should evaluate those located near the eyes and on the face, says Robert Adler, M.D., director of medical education at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and vice-chair of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California.

The reason, Adler says, is that the vascular formations may physically block the eye, leading to vision loss or even blindness. There also is a slight risk that they can extend into other parts of the body, including the trachea, which can lead to airway obstruction.

Teen Health Update

The “Sex Talk” Comes Too Late for Many Kids

Are we parents closing the barn door after the horse is already trotting down the road? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents educate their children about sexuality beginning early in life. But according to a new study published in the medical journal *Pediatrics*, many of these discussions are occurring after adolescents have already passed key sexual milestones.

In a series of surveys with 141 parents and their teenaged children, researchers found more than 40% of children had

sexual intercourse before any discussion with their parents about sexually transmitted disease symptoms, condom use, choosing birth control, or what to do if a partner refuses to use a condom.

This says it might be time for a chat. But it helps to look at teaching your kids about sexuality as a long-term process, not as “the talk,” experts say. Start young, answering your kids’ questions as they come up. That will help pave the way for good communication down the road.



CONCERNED ABOUT FOOD ALLERGIES?

Don’t Wait Too Long to Introduce Your Child to Solid Food

Late introduction of solid foods may increase the risk of allergic sensitization to food and inhalant allergens, according to a new study published recently in the medical journal *Pediatrics*.

Researchers examined the diets and allergic sensitivities of 994 children. Results indicate that a late introduction of solid foods was associated with increased allergic sensitization to food and inhalant allergens.

Eggs, wheat, and oats were most commonly related to food sensitization, while

potatoes and fish were strongly associated with inhalant sensitization.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the introduction of solid foods between the ages of 4 and 6 months. The study authors conclude that neither extended, exclusive breastfeeding, nor delaying the introduction of solid foods, may prevent allergic diseases in children.

Want more information on food allergies? Visit www.HealthMart.com.

HEALTH UPDATE

Colonoscopy 101

Most People Should Be Tested Starting at Age 50, Experts Say

Colonoscopy is a procedure used to see inside the colon and rectum. Routine colonoscopy to look for early signs of cancer should begin at age 50 for most people — earlier if there is a family history of colorectal cancer, a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease, or other risk factors, says the National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse, a division of the National Institutes of Health. Your doctor can advise you on how often to get a colonoscopy.

All solids must be emptied from the gastrointestinal tract by following a clear liquid diet for one to three days before the procedure, and a bowel-emptying treatment is usually given the day before the procedure.

During colonoscopy, a sedative, and possibly pain medication, helps keep patients relaxed. A doctor can remove polyps and can biopsy abnormal-looking tissues during the procedure. Driving is not permitted for 12 hours afterward to allow the sedative time to wear off.

Want more information on colorectal health? Visit www.HealthMart.com.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Compare costs between fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables. Today's freezing methods do a great job of retaining nutrients. In fact, some fresh food may lose more nutrients during storage and transportation when compared with frozen foods.

— Source: Tennessee Tech University



- One extra hour of sleep per night appears to decrease the risk of coronary artery calcification, which can lead to cardiovascular disease. The benefit of one hour of additional sleep was comparable to the gains from lowering systolic blood pressure by 17 mm Hg.

— Source: University of Chicago Medical Center



Indoor Air Can Be Bad for Your Health

But You Can Make It Healthier

Want to make your home healthier? Follow this advice, given by building scientist Doug Garrett, CEM, CDSM, president of Building Performance and Comfort in Leander, Texas, at a recent annual meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology:

- **Keep the air conditioner clean.** Use a filter with an American Society of Heating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Standard MERV (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) of at least 8.
- **Do not have carpeting in any buildings or homes where humidity can't be controlled.** If you cannot replace carpet, vacuum thoroughly, carefully, and methodically so you don't stir dust into the air. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter or a cyclonic vacuum.
- **Prevent mold by dehumidifying the basement.** In unfinished basements, humidity should be kept lower than 50%. Do your research before buying a dehumidifier. "There are scams out there" says May. "'Exhaust-only' systems are not effective."



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KIDS AND KIDNEY STONES?

Yes, Researchers Say

Children today get kidney stones more than ever before. Chalk it up to our modern-day lifestyle and diet, says Gary Faerber, M.D., a urologist at the University of Michigan Health System. The most common type in the U.S. are calcium-oxalate stones. The more dehydrated one becomes, the more concentrated the urine becomes. This can lead to the formation of crystals, which can then form kidney stones. (There are other causes for kidney stones in children, such as metabolic disorders.)

The most common symptoms of kidney stones in children are back and abdominal pain. According to Faerber, doctors recommend that children between ages 5 and 10 with kidney

stones drink six glasses of water a day. Kids over age 10 with kidney stones should drink 10 glasses daily.

If stones are small, doctors recommend that children attempt to pass them on their own. If the stone needs to be treated, sound waves can break it into small pieces, which the child can then pass. Or the doctor can pass a miniaturized instrument through the urinary tract and treat the stone with a laser.

Prevention is always best. “Get your child to stay away from sugar-filled drinks, sodas, and colas and go to something natural like plain old water,” says Faerber.

HEALTH TIP



Safe Sleep for Baby

To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), babies should be:

- Placed on their backs when sleeping
- Placed on a separate sleep surface from their parents
- Placed in a sleep environment without blankets, pillows, or other soft bedding

— Source: *The American Academy of Pediatrics*

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