

# family time

Newsletter from Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital



## Kid BITS



### Decrease the Amount of Sugar in Your Family's Diet

Many American families eat too much sugar. It is not healthy. Parents know that desserts, cereals, candy and soda contain large amounts of sugar. What they may not know is that sugar is also added to foods that seem healthy.

Yogurt, breads, granola and cereal bars include added sugar. Even soup, pasta sauce and canned fruit may contain extra sugar. *Children between the ages of 2 and 18 should consume less than 6 teaspoons, or 25 grams of added sugar a day.*

1. Make sweets a special treat.
2. Avoid sugary drinks. Drink water and low-fat milk instead.
3. **Read food labels.** Learn which products contain added sugar like fructose, dextrose and corn syrup.
4. Eat less processed foods.
5. Eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Making healthy changes takes time. Do not give up. Your small steps will lead to healthy eating for life.

### Cell phone Use Can Impact Your Child's Learning

Children learn from talking with parents. It is not just the number of words a child hears. It is the *back and forth exchange without interruption* that helps kids learn. Talking, looking at each other, nodding your head and paying attention are vital for learning to take place.

A cell phone call, a look at social media or a reply to a text breaks this crucial back and forth interaction. When that happens, the back and forth exchange breaks. As a result, the child does not learn.

Optimum learning requires human social connection.

- Spend some uninterrupted time with your child. Put away or turn off your cell phone when you are together.
- Notice and comment on what your child is doing. *"Do you like that pillow? It is so soft."*

Language skills are crucial for success in school and beyond. Maximize your child's learning potential with your undivided attention.

## Talk with Your Kids About Politics

Unlike past generations, today's kids are regularly exposed to politics and world events. They hear adults talk. They see social media and 24-hour news reports. All exchange comments and opinions on social issues like jobs, health care, war, school safety and climate change.

Kids are listening. According to a Kidshealth.org poll, 75% of kids and 79% of teens thought that the outcome of an election would change their lives.

Kids are influenced by what they see and hear. Depending on age, they might not fully understand the issues. They worry about how these social issues will affect them and their families.

Discuss elections and political issues with your child.

- **Use words she will understand.** Start with social issues in your own community, especially if your child is young. She may not be interested in more global affairs.
- **Be honest.** Share your opinion. But, let him know others may have a different view.
- **Ask her opinion.** What does she think and feel?



- **Calmly discuss his views.** Be prepared for his opinion to be different than yours. That is OK.
- **Stay positive during discussions.** Model respect for her views and others. Showing anger can be upsetting. It may discourage her from future sharing and discussion.
- **Focus on his concerns.** Find out what he fears most. Provide reassurance, but do not just say, "Don't worry." Talk about how an election outcome, event or legislation could affect your family.

Voting makes your family part of the political process that creates change. Be the positive influence that encourages your child to vote.

### Timely Tip

Mindfulness training helps a person learn how to fully focus on the present moment. It can ease stress and improve over-all mental health. According to studies, it can also help students during high stress times, like final exams.

As you help your teen prepare for final exams, include mindfulness training. Set aside daily at-home practice time.

TO LEARN MORE:  
 Visit [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org) –  
*mindfulness training or search the web.*



## Good Stress and Bad Stress – Know the Difference

Stress is a part of life. However, studies show that American kids are experiencing stress at new levels. These chronic stress levels affect a child’s ability to learn and think.

Not all stress is bad. Some kinds of stress help kids learn to cope and problem-solve life’s ups and downs. This stress is usually short lived. With loving support, it becomes an important part of healthy development.

Chronic or toxic stress is different. Violence in the home, corporal punishment and household chaos negatively affects a child’s brain. Children exposed to maternal verbal abuse may develop a lower verbal IQ. Chronically stressed parents pass tension and anxiety to their child.

### TO LEARN MORE

- Visit <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/how-stress-affects-your-child/>

### Prevent or Deal with Your Stress

- Create a calm, loving home. No fighting or yelling.
- Never allow verbal or physical abuse.
- Avoid spanking.
- Spend time together as a family. Play games. Take advantage of community resources and events.
- Promote a positive and loving relationship with each family member.
- Exercise often. It helps reduce the effects of stress.
- Encourage your child to play a team sport or play team games.
- Seek counseling if needed.

## Prepare Your Middle School Child for High School

Depending on life goals, a high school student must choose some required classes. Colleges and trade or technical schools have courses they expect students to take. In the spring, before your child begins high school:

- 1. Discuss career goals.** What does your child want to do after high school?
- 2. Attend high school open houses.** Learn what the high school offers: core curriculum, electives, sports and clubs.
- 3. Discuss post graduation schools he might want to attend.** His choice of classes depends on this type of college or school. He may need four years of Science

and Math. He can change his mind throughout the years, but he should not be caught unprepared.

- 4. Meet with a guidance counselor to chart a 4-year plan.** Make sure she can fulfill all requirements to get into the school or college of her choice. Does she need honors or AP classes to raise her class rank? Does the high school allow her to leave campus for technical or college courses?
- 5. Enroll him in electives that support his passions.** Art, music and journalism create rich learning. Clubs, sports and extra-curricular activities may improve his resume.

- 6. Explore volunteer or paid jobs that reflect his interests and career goals.** Colleges value students who work to improve their community. They desire students who have a unique story to tell.

Planning ahead improves your child’s chance of success.





# classes & events

**Carol Jo Vecchie Women & Children's Center at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital**  
Pre-registration required for the following classes. Unless otherwise noted, call 217-744-2229.

- Baby Basics I - All About Baby
- Baby Basics II - Parenthood
- Birth Center Tours
- Childbirth Express (Saturday class)
- Dinner for Two—Breastfeeding Your Baby
- First Steps Mom-and-Baby Support Group
- Joy of Grandparenting
- Marvelous Multiples
- New Daddy Boot Camp
- Welcome Baby Sibling Class

**For information on these classes and other support groups**, log onto [www.st-johns.org/education](http://www.st-johns.org/education).

**HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital Breastfeeding 24-hr. Warmline—217-535-3983**

## Dealing with Feelings Support Group for Pregnancy, Baby Blues and Postpartum Depression

Learn coping skills, receive comfort and support, and share feelings. Meets in the NICU Conference Room on the 4th floor of the CJV WCC at St. John's Children's Hospital. Go to the [www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org) home page for a list of 2018 dates and times.

**Memorial Medical Center**  
Pre-registration required for the following classes. Unless otherwise noted, call 217-788-3333.

- Adoptive Parents Class
- Baby Care Users Manual
- The Get-Real Breastfeeding Guide
- Grandparent Class
- I'm Going to Be a Big Brother/Sister
- Infant Safety Classes
- Lacion Consultation
- Mom/Baby Support Group
- Teen Pregnancy Class
- Working and Breastfeeding

**For information on these classes and other support groups**, log onto [www.memorialmedical.com](http://www.memorialmedical.com)

Spring is a time to enjoy both indoor and activities with your child. Visit local historical sites. Find outdoor family-friendly activities.

**Many are free. Check the websites below for more events.**

- [visitspringfieldillinois.com](http://visitspringfieldillinois.com)
- [illinoistimes.com](http://illinoistimes.com)
- [springfieldmoms.org](http://springfieldmoms.org)
- [illinoisstatemuseum.org/](http://illinoisstatemuseum.org/)
- <http://lincolnlibrary.info/>
- <http://www.alplm.org/>  
*Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum*
- <http://www.hcfta.org/events>  
*Hoogland Center for the Arts*

## Parent Help Line

**Parenting tips    New ideas    Referrals**

*We welcome all parenting concerns - big or small.*

Call **(217) 544-5808** or **(888) 727-5889**.

**10 a.m. to 10 p.m. – 7 days a week – 365 days a year**



Log onto [www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org).

We continue to add new tips to help parents.

**Find information on**

- Postpartum Depression & Mood Disorders**
- Mindful Eating - A Healthy Approach to Food**
- Confront Adversity with a Positive Attitude**
- Babysitter Checklist**
- Choosing a Sport for Your Child**
- Dad - Got a Minute? Give it to Your Kid**



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