

family time

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



Kid BITS



Choose Simple Toys for Babies and Young Kids

Parents want toys that will make their child *smart*. Ads claim that digital toys are more educational. This confuses parents because research shows that these claims are **not true**. High quality traditional toys are the best option.

The American Academy of Pediatrics prefers simple toys like building blocks, puzzles, cars, dolls, puppets, stuffed animals and crayons. They:

- help develop a child's brain,
- encourage *positive playful interaction* between parent and child,
- boost vital skills that help children learn, and
- teach children how to interact with others.

Electronic toys have limited options for play. With simple toys, playtime is versatile. Children use their imagination to direct play. Toys can be used alone or with others.

Toys do not have to be expensive. Playing with household items like a box or a blanket boosts a child's imagination and problem-solving skills. Reading books *together* provides warm, human interaction that voice-recorded reading does not offer.

Playtime with a parent ends with smiles and laughter. Digital toys cannot replace the importance of these positive moments.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT

- www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Ignore-the-Flashing-Screens-The-Best-Toys-Go-Back-to-the-Basics.aspx

Start the Sports Season with a Safety Gear Check-Up

Safety gear helps keep kids safe from injury. Frequent use and growing bodies can make safety gear – *not so safe*.

Do not take chances with your child's sports safety gear.

- Inspect the sports gear – *often*. Start before the sports season begins. Look for anything worn, broken or missing. Check buckles, straps and padding.
- Use the *correct and most up-to-date protective gear*. This may include helmets, shin guards, mouth and face guards, pads, cups, ankle and wrist guards, shoes with rubber cleats and eye wear.
- Make sure your kids use the proper safety gear *for practices as well as games*.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT

- www.parenthelpline.org for tips on helmet fitting and safety
- www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/pages/Sports-Injury-Prevention-Tip-Sheet.aspx
- www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/sports_safety_tips_2015_0.pdf

Safety Tips for Buying Used Items

Thrift store and garage sale shopping help ease a family's budget woes. Be sure to follow these shopping safety tips.

- **Never buy a used car safety seat.** The safety seat may be on the recall list. An accident or years of use affect its protective ability. Newer models have increased safety features.
- **Do not buy cribs older than June 2011** - the date safety standards changed. Newer models are safer.
- **Never buy a used helmet.** Helmets are designed to protect from **one** accident only. Damage may not be visible. Safety standards change. Newer models may provide greater protection.
- Stay away from items that smell like smoke.
- Make sure furniture and painted items are not painted with *lead paint*.
- Closely examine high chairs. Make sure they are sturdy, do not fold easily and have a secure crotch strap to keep baby from slipping. Check for cracks, loose screws and

recalls. New models are usually safer than older ones.

- Stay away from stuffed animals, mattresses and bedding. Mold and bed bugs are a concern.
- Do not buy used baby bottles.
- Bypass underwear, swimming suits and hats.
- Avoid buying broken items that you cannot fix, or items with missing pieces.

Check for recalls *on all baby items* by visiting www.cpsc.gov or go to the manufacturer's website.

TO LEARN MORE. VISIT

- <https://cpsc.gov/Business--Manufacturing/Business-Education/ResaleThrift-Stores-Information-Center/>
- <https://www.safekids.org/latest-product-and-safety-news>



Make Dining Out – Healthy

Dining out with kids presents several challenges. Serving sizes vary from one restaurant to another. Portions can be 2 – 3 times larger than the recommended serving size. This can include childrens' meals as well.

Unlike adult menus, most kid's menu items are limited to 3 – 4 choices. Chicken nuggets, mac and cheese, French fries and cheese sandwiches are common kid menu fare. Meals do not include fruits or vegetables that parents want their child to eat.

Develop a healthy-eating plan of action for dining out.

1. Keep portions under control. Know what portion size is right for you and your child. Ask about serving sizes. If yours or your child's plate includes too much food, *take food home*.
2. Order an adult side item of salad, fruit or vegetable if your child's meal does not include any of these foods.

continued on page 3



3. Consider ordering an appetizer, soup or side salad for your child’s meal instead of items from the kid’s menu. The portion sizes are often smaller. This offers a larger choice of foods.
4. Order an adult meal for your child. Share the meal with a sibling, if that works. Ask for take-home containers.

Use the *MyPlate* as a guide for healthy food choices. Divide your plate into 4 sections. Use the top two sections for a protein and a starch. Select 1 fruit and 1 vegetable or 2 vegetables for the bottom 2 sections.

TO LEARN MORE. VISIT

- www.choosemyplate.gov
- kidshealth.org/en/parents/portions.html

Pointing – A Big Milestone for Baby

Around 11 months of age, babies start using a pointing gesture with their hand and arm. This simple gesture is a big milestone for a baby. At around 18 months, babies start to use their index finger to point. Finger pointing is an early form of communication. It is important for language development.

Babies point because they want something. Pointing is also a way to direct a person’s attention. *“I want you to see what I am looking at.”* This shared or joint attention is an important social skill. It gives parents and babies a new way to communicate.

When your child points:

- Show interest. Be excited.
- Look from your baby to the object and back to baby.
- Point and label the item. *“Look - it is a banana!”*
- Describe what you both see. *“The banana is yellow. It is yummy - mmmmmm”*

Babies love to have someone share their excitement. With every exchange, a child learns – names of objects, sounds, colors, purpose.

Encourage finger pointing. Point to and name objects. Start with items that are close, like body parts. *“Nose, fingers, toes.”* As your child learns, gradually point and name things farther away.

TO LEARN MORE. VISIT

- www.parenting.com/article/baby-milestones-9-12-months-the-power-of-pointing
- www.fitpregnancy.com/baby/health-development/baby-milestones-learning-to-point
- www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Articles/What%E2%80%99s-the-Point-of-Pointing.aspx



Timely Tip

Your smart phone may be the dirtiest item in your home. You take it *everywhere*, even to the bathroom. Reduce germs.

- Clean your smartphone *daily*. Consult your smartphone manufacturer for tips to clean and disinfect.
- Use proper handwashing, *especially after you use the bathroom*.
- *Wash your hands before you eat.*

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.

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 home page for a list of 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

The spring season offers many ways to enjoy time spent with your family. Warmer weather means spending time outdoors! Check the websites below for more events.

- visitspringfieldillinois.com
- illinoistimes.com
- springfieldmoms.org
- lincolnsnewsalem.com
- http://springfieldparks.org
- hensonrobinsonzoo.com
- lincolnmemorialgarden.org

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.

We continue to add new tips to help parents.

Find information on

Stay Safe During Tornado Season

Do Not Be Distracted When Walking and Running

How to Talk to a Coach

Mindful Eating – A Healthy Approach to Food

Know Your Teen's Brain



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Parent Help Line at St. John's Children's Hospital.

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