

HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

NEWS FROM CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL HERMANN HOSPITAL WINTER/SPRING 2011

FOR PARENTS

Helping parents prevent SIDS, sleep easier

There is nothing more heartbreaking than the loss of an infant. Each year, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) – the unexplained death of a child younger than age 1 – claims thousands of lives. Although experts don't know exactly why it occurs, following safe sleeping practices can decrease the risk. Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital is dedicated to teaching parents the safe way to put babies to sleep.

"There are some risk factors for SIDS, such as low birth weight

or prematurity, that parents can't control," explains Polina Gelfer, M.D., a pediatrician affiliated with Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and assistant professor of pediatrics at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) Medical School. "But there are many risk factors that are preventable. It's estimated that parents can reduce the chance for SIDS by 40 percent just by following safe sleep practices."

Dr. Gelfer recommends following these easy steps:

- **Remember "Back to Sleep."** Always put baby on his or her back to sleep and instruct other caregivers to do the same. Don't use wedges to keep baby in this position, though.
- **Resist snoozing together.** Never sleep with baby and don't allow others to either. "The safest place for a baby to sleep in the first year is in a crib near a parent," advises Dr. Gelfer.
- **Avoid overheating.** Keep indoor temperatures at comfortable levels for a lightly clothed adult and don't overdress your baby. Never put a blanket over the baby's head, and place the crib away from heat sources.
- **Choose your crib wisely.** Check if your model has been recalled at www.cpsc.gov.
- **Keep it simple.** Outfit the crib with only a firm mattress and tight-fitting sheet. If a blanket is necessary for warmth, consider purchasing a wearable blanket sack. Don't put stuffed animals or pillows in the crib.
- **Avoid smoke exposure.** Studies show that secondhand smoke significantly increases the risk for SIDS. ■

For more safe sleeping tips, visit childrensmemorialhermann.org/SIDS.



Keeping Your Children Active This Season

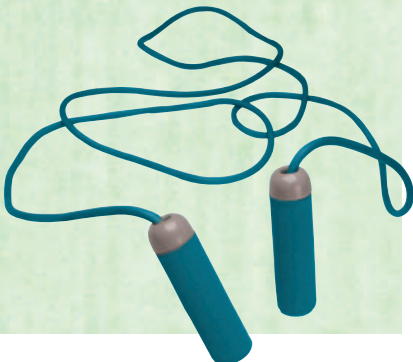
Are your children spending the season in front of a screen? Help them beat the bad-weather blues with some exercise.

“Being active can prevent medical problems such as heart disease and diabetes,” says Ricardo Mosquera, M.D., a pediatrician affiliated with Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital and an assistant professor at UTHealth Medical School. “Encourage your kids to get at least an hour of moderate physical activity a day.”

Here are some activities you can do with your children to make exercise part of your daily routine:

- Listen to your favorite music and dance or jump rope to the beat.
- Do household chores together to music. Sweep and mop the floor, vacuum the carpet or wash the windows.
- See how long you and your child can stretch out and strengthen your muscles. Your child should not hold the stretch for more than 30 seconds.
- Do sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups and jumping jacks. But be sure to warm your muscles up first with light activity or movement.
- Walk at a fast pace up and down a hallway.

Always make sure your child won’t get hurt when you exercise. For example, remove throw rugs or other tripping hazards.



Assess your health before pregnancy, experts urge

If there’s a chance that you could start a family soon, take time to take stock of your health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued new guidelines that advise women to focus on their health before they become pregnant – for the first time or the next time.

“It’s best to check in with your doctor at least three months before conception,” says Dian Ginsberg, M.D., an obstetrician/gynecologist affiliated with Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital. “During your doctor’s visit, you can review your health history. Your doctor may also give you advice on nutrition and lifestyle changes.”

The Importance of Folate

Folate is very important for the growth of your baby. “It is most important to get enough folate in the months *before* you get pregnant and in the early months of your pregnancy,” says Dr. Ginsberg. “When you get enough folate, you lower the chances that your baby will have certain birth defects of the brain and spinal cord.”

Get 400 micrograms of folate daily from a folic acid supplement or multivitamin, or from folate-filled foods. Foods high in folate include dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, whole-grain breads and cereals,

fruits such as strawberries and oranges, dried peas and beans.

Other Prepregnancy Tips

In addition to getting more folate, Dr. Ginsberg advises you to take these steps:

- Get your vitamin D levels checked and maximized. Women need around 2,000 IU of vitamin D a day to maximize health before pregnancy.
- Make sure you’ve had all the vaccinations you need.
- Tell your doctor about any prescription and over-the-counter medicines you take.
- Stop smoking if you smoke.
- Avoid alcohol, which can make it more difficult for some women to get pregnant.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. This can reduce the risks for birth defects, preterm delivery and cesarean section.
- Manage any medical conditions you have, such as asthma or diabetes.
- Avoid chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides. ■

The Women’s Center at Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital provides family-centered care to women during the perinatal period. To learn more, visit childrensmemorialhermann.org/maternity.

Some heart risks begin in childhood

High cholesterol is a condition that puts many adults at risk for heart disease. But recent evidence suggests that some children show signs of this serious problem, too. What can parents do to protect their young ones? Recognizing risk is the first step.

“High cholesterol can cause arteries to harden – a condition called atherosclerosis,” says Mohammed Numan, M.D., a pediatric cardiologist affiliated with Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital and an associate professor at UTHealth Medical School. “The earliest signs of atherosclerosis are fatty streaks. Children who have fatty streaks have a greater chance of developing atherosclerosis in adulthood.”

Research shows that these streaks can be found in the arteries of babies whose expectant mothers have high cholesterol. Other studies say that high levels of LDL cholesterol is causing atherosclerosis to begin in childhood.

The following factors can also increase risk: poor diet, family history of heart disease, obesity and diabetes. If your child has any of these risk factors, you and your doctor can decide if a cholesterol screening is necessary.

High cholesterol can be prevented and managed with healthy lifestyle



strategies. The key is a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet. Experts say this eating plan won’t harm a child’s normal growth and development. Children are also encouraged to engage in at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity on most – preferably all – days of the week.

Dr. Numan recommends the following healthy lifestyle tips:

- Provide a balanced diet. Introduce children early to fruits, vegetables and other healthful foods that taste good.
- Teach them nutrition. Help them read nutrition labels on groceries

and involve them in preparing meals.

- Make exercise a fun family affair. Hiking, swimming or in-line skating together can make exercise enjoyable.
- Steer your children away from the TV. Household chores – such as mowing the lawn – get children moving. ■

We’re focused on your child’s heart health. To learn more about pediatric cardiology services at Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital, visit childrensmemorialhermann.org/heartinstitute.

turkey meat loaf

Here’s a heart-healthier version of an old family favorite. Your kids can get their hands dirty by helping to mix the ingredients.

- 1 lb. ground lean **turkey**
- ½ cup regular **oats**, dry
- 1 large **egg**
- 1 tbsp. dehydrated **onion**
- ¼ cup **catsup**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine all ingredients and mix well.
3. Bake in loaf pan for 30 to 35 minutes or to internal temperature of 165 degrees.
4. Cut into five slices and serve.

Find more kid-friendly recipes online. Visit childrensmemorialhermann.org/resources. You can then search for recipes under the Kids Health section.

Makes five servings.

Each serving contains 192 calories, 7 g total fat (2 g saturated fat), 103 mg cholesterol, 214 mg sodium, 1 g total fiber, 21 g protein, 23 g carbohydrates and 292 mg potassium.





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Preparing Your Child for a Medical Procedure

Experts say well-informed and calm parents can play a key role in helping their child relax before a medical procedure. Here are some tips to prepare yourself and your child.

- Find out all you can about the medical procedure. Talk with the pediatrician or other hospital staff about what to expect before, during and after the procedure. Ask about any special instructions, such as restricting food and drink if your child needs anesthesia.
- Explain the reason for the procedure to your child, based on his or her age and level of understanding. Be honest and comforting, and use nonthreatening words.
- On the day of the procedure, let your child know that you'll be waiting nearby.

Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital's Child Life Specialists can also assist in preparing children and their families for medical procedures. For more details about Child Life services, visit childrensmemorialhermann.org/childlife.

A more comfortable imaging experience for kids

Undergoing a medical procedure can be stressful – even scary – for children. That's why Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital recently opened a new Children's Imaging and Procedure Suite that provides a more comfortable experience for kids and parents. The suite consolidates pediatric imaging and procedures into a single location on the ground floor. It houses two pediatric catheterization labs, pediatric noninvasive cardiology and pediatric gastroenterology.

"This is an exciting time for us," says Shannon Wright, director of operations for Women's and Children's Services. "We've completed the first of a two-part renovation project, which is already allowing us to improve customer service, operate more efficiently and add new services, including pediatric electrophysiology. It also enabled us to create a more positive customer experience for kids and their parents by designing and creating a space especially with them in mind."

All cardiac interventional and electrophysiology procedures are performed in the two pediatric cath labs. Pediatric noninvasive cardiology services available include fetal and pediatric echocardiography, ultrasound, tilt-table testing and stress testing. Gastrointestinal services include the full range of endoscopy procedures.

The second part of the renovation is now under way, with plans to move



radiology/fluoroscopy, ultrasound imaging services and magnetoencephalography (MEG) to the suite. "The vast majority of noninvasive MEG imaging done at the hospital is pediatric, so the move will allow us to further improve efficiency and customer service," Wright says.

All services are provided by pediatric-trained staff experienced at working with parents and their children, and Child Life Specialists are available to explain procedures and provide a better experience for kids. ■

To learn more about imaging services at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital, visit childrensmemorialhermann.org/imaging.