safe & sound

HEALTH AND SAFETY NEWS FROM THE PEDIATRIC EXPERTS AT CHILDREN’S MERCY HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

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Children's Mercy
HOSPITALS & CLINICS
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**HouseCall**

**Caring for—and Controlling—Chronic Headaches**

**What’s Causing Your Child’s Cough?**

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**Question:** My tween-age son has a headache at least once a week. What could be causing this?

**Answer:** Head pain can occur at any age, including infancy. The most common recurring headache types in children and young adults are migraines and tension-type headaches. Head pain also can be a symptom of an underlying illness or a side-effect from medications.

**Migraines**
Migraines can start at any age, but they most commonly being in early adolescence. They are characterized by moderate to severe, throbbing-type pain at the front, side, or both sides of the head. They also are associated with some or all of the following:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sensitivity to light, sound, or both
- “Auras,” or signs, such as blurred vision or seeing spots, before the headache comes

Migraine triggers include stress, very bright light, strong odors, weather changes, and occasionally certain foods. Inadequate diet or irregular sleep schedules also can make migraines more likely.

**Tension-Type Headaches**
Tension-type headaches are mild to moderate in nature and tend to affect teen-agers more than younger children. These headaches are more likely to occur at the end of the day, and are linked to stress. They cause a feeling of tightness and pressure-type pain around the head and neck. Nausea can be associated, but is less common than with migraines.

**Other Headaches**
Headache is a common side effect of many underlying illnesses including strep throat and several viral infections. It is also, less commonly, associated with more significant illness.

**If Your Child Has a Headache**
- Give your child ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or naproxen sodium at the first sign of a headache.
- For migraine, apply a cold compress to your child’s head, and let him rest in a dark, quiet room.
- If your child keeps getting headaches, see your doctor.

**To Help Prevent Headaches**
- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule.
- Learn stress management techniques and practice them daily. Mild to moderate exercise works well.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Always have a good breakfast. Consider a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack during school. Don’t skip meals. If the diet is not always ideal, a daily multivitamin is helpful.
- Record the day and time of your child’s headache and consider what may have caused it. This information may help your child’s doctor with diagnosis and treatment.
- Avoid the overuse of pain medications. If used too frequently, they can cause head pain.

Headache also is a very common side effect of many medications.

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Do you have a question for the pediatric experts at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics? Submit your question by sending an e-mail to thassen@cmh.edu or writing the editor: Telisa Hassen, Community Relations, Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics, 2401 Gillham Road, Kansas City, MO 64108. We will answer as many inquiries as possible.
**Question:** Every year when the weather turns cold, my child starts coughing. I know colds are inevitable, but how can I tell if the cough is caused by a cold or something else?

**Answer:** Coughing keeps airways clear of fumes, mucus, and other irritants. But when a cough lingers, a viral or bacterial infection is often to blame. Infections that can cause coughing include colds, sinusitis, croup, and bronchitis.

**Colds**
*Symptoms:* Sneezing, watery eyes, and a congested, runny nose  
*What to do:* Run a cool-mist vaporizer in the child’s room, give over-the-counter decongestants, and encourage extra fluid intake.  
*One word of caution:* Cough-cold remedies sold over the counter have not been proven to be effective in children and some have even caused serious side effects like strokes. Use these products only with the advice of your pediatrician.

**Sinusitis**
*Symptoms:* Persistent runny nose with fever, hoarseness, facial tenderness, headache, and a cough that worsens at night  
*What to do:* Call your pediatrician. Your child will need to be evaluated by your doctor. Sinusitis may need treatment with antibiotics.

**Croup**
*Symptoms:* A loud cough like a seal’s bark, usually at night; fever or noisy breathing may occur  
*What to do:* Call your child’s doctor if the condition does not improve. Even if the child seems much better the next morning, croup often returns when the sun goes down. To help your child resolve this illness, run a cool-mist vaporizer in your child’s room for the next few nights.

**Bronchitis**
*Symptoms:* Cold symptoms at first, followed by a wheezy cough and sometimes difficulty breathing; most common in children younger than age 2  
*What to do:* Call your pediatrician. Some cases may require hospitalization or prescription medication.

Parents should check with their child’s doctor before giving cough medicine. And call your pediatrician immediately if your child:
- has trouble breathing or has noisy, rapid breathing  
- runs a fever higher than 101 degrees Fahrenheit  
- refuses to drink anything  
- is sluggish or sleepy  
- has a bluish tinge around lips or fingernails.

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**Taking Time Out to Help Others**

For many families, schedules are tight. But finding the time to volunteer is well worth it.

To get started:

- **Do a little research.** Search the Internet for information about volunteer opportunities. Or, look up “volunteerism” in the phone book. You also can call local nonprofit agencies, hospitals, churches, and homeless shelters for ideas.

- **Focus on short-term projects.** Simple, short-term projects are ideal for children because they can hold kids’ attention and enthusiasm. They also can fit into busy family schedules.

- **Choose hands-on activities.** Look for projects where your children can actively participate. Picking up trash on a local bike path or visiting the elderly are examples of things even the youngest volunteer can do.

- **Zero in on interests.** Focus volunteer efforts in areas of greatest interest. If your family loves animals, contact a local shelter to see if they need help. If your kids are worried about disaster victims they saw on the news, open a lemonade stand and donate the proceeds.

- **Have fun.** To make the most of your volunteer time, laugh, tell stories, and joke with one another. Your kids will remember and cherish this time together.

National Family Volunteer Day is November 17. So go ahead, gather your family and do something good for others. You’ll find that helping others is the greatest reward!

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**Safe & Sound in Video**

Now available on DVD—Safe & Sound: A Children’s Health and Safety Video Series for Parents. The fall edition of this quarterly video production features news-style stories on:

- international adoption—welcoming a child into a new home, a new country  
- helping your children keep active during the cold weather  
- teen driving and distractions  
- hidden holiday hazards.

Safe & Sound magazine subscribers will automatically receive a copy of the DVD. Visitors to our web site—www.childrensmery.org—can either download the stories or request a copy of the DVD, which will be mailed to them FREE as well! The series is made possible with support from Kohl’s department stores.
Buying presents, attending parties, planning the holiday meal ... it seems as if there is not enough time to get things done during the holidays. Stress seems ever present this time of year, as parents and families rush to get the necessary things done. But remember, children can get stressed, too.

“Children are a good barometer of what is going on around them,” says Ed Christophersen, PhD, Behavioral Psychologist at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “If the adults are calm, they will be calm. If adults are hurried, irritable, and frustrated, children pick up on that.”

The following is a list of reasons children suffer holiday stress:

● They are often dragged along to crowded, noisy shopping centers, which can be confusing. Often, the pushing and bickering of overworked, stressed-out adults give children a mixed message about the “holiday spirit.”

● Bombarded with advertising, children can begin to feel deprived if they do not have all the toys they hear about. Comparing their gifts to those of other children also can cause grief.

● During the holidays, relatives crowd into one household and attempt to enjoy the occasion. However, they are not always successful and the holidays can be filled with anxiety and open hostility. Even when the children are not directly involved, they are quick to pick up on the tension that adults display.

● Sad memories of a loved one can be difficult throughout the holidays. To make the holidays more fulfilling for the whole family, Children’s Mercy has put together some tips for reducing holiday stress:

   ● Consider doing your holiday shopping without your children.
   ● Spend time with your children baking cookies, reading holiday books, or making decorations. Separate activities into stages: If children get bored with a project, let them walk away. Return to it later when the child is interested.
   ● Kids are not impressed with you spending large amounts on their gifts. They have an idea of how much you can afford. When you overspend, it makes them nervous.
   ● Remind your children that the spirit of the holiday season has nothing to do with the amount of money spent on gifts. One option is to have them make coupon books that include free services like doing dishes, taking out the trash, or getting the mail.

   ● When family or friends gather, parents still have to give time and attention to their children. Children don’t appreciate that you haven’t seen your relatives or friends in a long time. The children need you. So, plan to spend time with them, or don’t bring them on the visit.

   ● Try to balance your own expectations for the holidays. There’s no way an
overhyped holiday can live up to everyone’s expectations.

- Make sure your child gets as much exercise as possible throughout the holidays. Sitting in front of the television does not give children the proper amount of exercise they need to function.

Most of all, remember, the holidays are supposed to be a happy time of year. By remembering these tips, you can help your family have a relaxed and enjoyable holiday season.

Make This with Your Kids!
Crunchy Pumpkin Pie

Get your kids involved with the holidays by helping you make this delicious pie. Not only will your kids find it fun, but this pie is good for your heart, too—it uses only a small amount of oil in the crust and skim milk in the filling!

What you’ll need for the pie crust:
- 1 c. quick-cooking oats
- ¼ c. whole-wheat flour
- ¼ c. ground almonds
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp. water

For the pie filling:
- ¼ c. packed brown sugar
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg, beaten
- 4 tsp. vanilla
- 1 c. canned pumpkin
- ¾ c. evaporated skim milk

1. Preheat oven to 425º Fahrenheit.
2. Mix oats, flour, almonds, sugar, and salt together in small mixing bowl.
3. Blend oil and water together in measuring cup with fork or small whisk until emulsified.
4. Add oil mixture to dry ingredients and mix well. If needed, add small amount of water to hold mixture together.
5. Press into a 9-inch pie pan and bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until light brown.
6. Turn down oven to 350º Fahrenheit.
7. Mix sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt together in a bowl.
8. Add egg and vanilla. Mix to blend ingredients.
10. Pour into prepared pie shell.
11. Bake for 45 minutes at 350º Fahrenheit or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.

Yield: 9 servings
Each serving provides: Calories: 177
Total fat: 8 g Saturated fat: 1 g
Cholesterol: 24 mg Sodium: 153 mg
Taking the Right Dose ... the Right Way

Our medicine cabinets contain a growing number of medications with unwieldy instructions. The best way to become better informed is to read and understand the labels. It’s one of the most important parts of taking care of your child.

Did the doctor say to take one with every meal or without food? Can my child take this over-the-counter (OTC) cough suppressant with his doctor-prescribed asthma medication?

Used incorrectly, some medications can do more harm than good. So whether starting a new prescription or buying cold medicine, details matter.

Ask About Prescriptions
The right time to start thinking about the correct use of prescription medicines is when you get the prescription. Here are questions to ask the doctor:

- What’s the name of the medicine?
- How often should my child take it, at what dosage, and when?
- For how long should she take it?
- What side effects should we expect? What should I do if they occur?
- What foods, drinks, or other medications should she avoid while taking the medicine?
- What should I do if she forgets a dose?

Write the answers down. When you pick up the prescription, check that it is the same one the doctor prescribed. Never chew, crush, break, or dilute medicine unless the directions indicate you can—this may cause long-acting medicines to be absorbed too quickly.

Many liquid medications come with a plastic cup that holds the right amount. If not, ask your pharmacist for a cylindrical dosing spoon or an oral syringe, which is especially useful with small children. Otherwise, use a measuring spoon—ordinary spoons vary in size.

Check Nonprescription Drugs, Too
Approach OTC drugs with the same caution. Just because you can buy them without a prescription doesn’t mean they’re free of side effects or hazards. Before giving your child an OTC medicine, check with his doctor or pharmacist to make sure it’s safe in combination with any other medications he is taking.

When reading the package’s label, look for:
- dosage information
- warnings
- expiration date.

Before you buy an OTC medicine, make sure the tamper-resistant seal has not been broken.

What’s the Best Way to Give Medicine to Children?
Test your know-how with this true-or-false quiz:
1. It’s fine to use a regular kitchen teaspoon when measuring liquid medicine for children.
2. A syringe is one of the most effective devices for giving liquid medicine to infants and young children.

Answers:
1. False. Kitchen teaspoons vary in size. Your best choice: the device that comes with the product or a standard measuring spoon.
2. True. Syringes allow you to squirt medicine toward the back of a child’s mouth, where it is unlikely to spill out. But take off the protective cap—it can pop off and block a baby’s airway.

October is Talk About Prescriptions Month! Look through your cabinets and throw out any outdated medicines, and always remember to talk with your child’s doctor or pharmacists if you have questions.
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently updated its policy regarding teen drivers. Citing numerous studies that show teen-age drivers to be some of the most dangerous drivers on the road, the AAP stresses the important role parents play in keeping their teen-agers safe behind the wheel. “The number one killer of teens in the U.S. today continues to be motor vehicle crashes,” reflects Daryl A. Lynch, MD, Section Chief, Adolescent Medicine at Children’s Mercy Hospital and Clinics and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. Many states are having huge reductions in teen deaths by implementing graduated driver’s license legislation.

Why So Dangerous?
Sixteen-year-olds—the youngest of 12 million teen drivers—are almost nine times more likely to crash than an average driver. In addition, motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death among 16- to 20-year-olds.

The first step to change these frightening statistics is to understand why teen-agers are such dangerous drivers. A lot of research points to sheer inexperience as the main reason with age, failure to use safety belts, distractions, and other factors also playing a role. Most teen-agers granted a driver’s license, however, simply have not had enough exposure to the complex situations that all drivers encounter. As a result, they often use bad judgment and react inappropriately.

Protecting Teen Drivers
To help protect teen drivers—and everyone else on the road—the AAP encourages parents to do the following:

- **Serve as positive role models behind the wheel.** Parents with poor driving records are more likely to have teen-agers who are involved in crashes. Always demonstrate safe driving habits and buckle up.

- **Be strict and enforce rules and punishments.** Risky driving behaviors, traffic tickets, and crashes are less common among teen-agers whose parents control access to the vehicle and set strict limits.

- **Write and sign a parent-teen-ager driving contract.** A contract is a great way to ensure everyone understands expectations and rules.

Adolescent Medicine and Teen Clinic
Did you know that Children’s Mercy cares for children and adolescents up to 18 years of age? Our Adolescent Medicine section has a Teen Clinic and treats a wide range of mental and physical conditions and provides preventive services as well. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.childrensmercy.org](http://www.childrensmercy.org) and click Clinical Services then Adolescent Medicine.
Roller shoes, or "heelys," are popular among kids and teenagers, but for health and safety reasons these roller shoes stand out from the crowd. These half-sneaker and half-skate shoes allow wearers to switch between walking and rolling. While kids think it’s fun and hip, adults are questioning their safety.

“Young kids are slipping on these shoes without being aware of the risk involved with wearing them,” says Gregory Canty, MD, Emergency Medicine at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and instructor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine.

Last year there were more than 1,600 emergency room visits in the U.S. due to roller shoes. While most of the injuries are to the wrists and arms, out-of-control riding can result in much greater harm.

Despite the risks, injuries can be prevented. Here are some tips for safe heeling:

- Learn the skills before going out, particularly how to stop.
- Steer clear of crowded walkways.
- Avoid rolling in traffic. If you must cross the street, obey all traffic signals.
- Heel on smooth surfaces, and try to avoid curbs or steep hills.
- Do not let a young child heel unsupervised.

Heeling is similar to inline skating and skateboarding, so take the necessary safety precautions. Helmets, wrist protectors, knee and elbow pads are recommended.