A Winning Team for Cancer Care

Teaching Your Child Money Matters

Spring Training: How to Avoid Seasonal Allergies

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Complete and mail in the enclosed Reader Survey to be entered to win a FREE $100 Worlds of Fun gift certificate.

Check out our healthy living tips in the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.
Nothing to Sneeze At

Nasal allergies affect up to 40 percent of children in the United States, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. However, going above and beyond to protect your child from environmental threats may be doing more harm than good.

While you may think keeping your children in a nearly uncontaminated indoor atmosphere will protect them from spring allergies, it can actually lead to an underdeveloped immune system. The earlier kids are exposed to allergens, such as grass or mold, the easier it is for their bodies to recognize and respond appropriately—resulting in fewer seasonal allergies.

Finding Relief
In cases where nasal allergies have already developed, allergists recommend avoidance, medications and, in many cases, allergy shots for children ages 4 and older.

“Allergy shots are effective in controlling symptoms and decreasing the need for medication,” says Jay Portnoy, MD, Section Chief, Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “By treating symptoms with antihistamines and other over-the-counter drugs alone, symptoms can last 20 to 30 years. However, if allergy shots are given at an early age, it could reduce the duration of symptoms to five or 10 years.”

Other ways to protect your child from allergy exposure include:

• After playing outdoors, have your child immediately undress and bathe to remove allergens.
• Avoid outside playtime from late morning to early afternoon as these are the peak hours for pollen production.

Does your child have the sniffles? Learn more about allergies at the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.

Are You Hovering Over Your Child?

Most parents have the natural instinct to protect their children from harm and nurture them for life. You may think you’re simply being a good parent, but are you too involved?

There’s a trend in child rearing that experts refer to as “helicopter parenting.” The label was coined when experts noticed a new habit of parents “hovering” over their child’s life and being overly involved.

“You can’t teach them everything; you must create an atmosphere in which they can learn on their own,” says Edward Christophersen, PhD, Clinical Psychologist in Developmental and Behavioral Sciences at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “Children need to learn some habits and emotional responses on their own.”

Consider this scenario: You drop off your toddler at day care for the first time; chances are he’s going to be afraid. Your toddler may grab your leg. However, while standing there, he’ll start to take in his surroundings and become more comfortable. If you intervene by picking up and comforting your child, then you’re delaying this adjustment.

“This is a skill learned naturally; it cannot be taught,” says Dr. Christophersen. “Interrupting this naturally occurring process can lead to anxiety and separation issues as the child ages and can carry over into adulthood. If your child needs help doing everything, even calming down or sleeping, you’re probably hovering too much.”

For more parenting tips, visit the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.
The way children view money often has an impact on the way they handle other issues in life,” says Brian Belden, PhD, Child Psychologist in Developmental and Behavioral Sciences at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “An attitude toward money and material possessions, often impressed upon a child by his or her environment, is a key component to establishing that child’s overall approach toward life.”

Be Smart…Start Talking Money Now

Some daily activities parents can incorporate into their children’s routine to better influence smart spending habits include encouraging them to budget their allowance by dividing money into envelopes and separating the coins and dollars by categories.

“If parents gave their children $10 on a weekly basis for completing tasks around the house, they should then instruct their children to divide and distribute their earnings into different categories, such as church, savings, toys, entertainment or gifts,” says Dr. Belden. “By encouraging this, parents are helping their children understand how much they have to save in order to meet a particular goal.”

Other examples include:

• At the grocery store, require children to purchase items they want, such as gum or candy, with only their own money.
• Except in extraordinary circumstances, do not give children an advance on their allowance—encourage them to spend only the money they have.
• Parents should set a good example by following an effective budget themselves.

“The biggest mistake parents tend to make is modeling bad behavior and then expecting their children to do differently,” says Dr. Belden. “Demonstrating wise money decisions is often the best teaching tool available.”

Want to teach your children to make healthy choices for both their bodies and their pockets? Sign up for our FREE Kohl’s and Children’s Mercy Healthy Kids University classes, Learn to Shop for Healthy Foods or Making Meals Matter today. Visit our Web site at www.childrensmercy.org/hku to register. After the class, take your children grocery shopping and have them help you choose items while staying within a budget.
A Winning Team

Children in the region diagnosed with cancer have access to the most advanced care possible at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics. Our unique program of case management gives each child the support of a winning team.

Accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer, the Hematology/Oncology program at Children’s Mercy ensures children receive the most advanced and best care available. An exceptional group of specialists from a variety of disciplines come together to provide comprehensive care through the initial treatment phase and beyond.

Team Captains

Key members of each child’s oncology team include the primary oncologist, an advanced practice nurse and a social worker to ensure a continuity of care. Integral to the team approach, the advanced practice nurse works as the case manager, coordinating all the care for that child.

“Very few programs have our method of case management,” says Alan Gamis, MD, Section Chief, Oncology at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “Here, the advanced practice nurse works hand-in-hand with the primary physician and others to deliver the highest level of care possible. This unique approach truly benefits families and patient outcomes.”

Learning the Playbook

The team approach is designed to educate cancer patients and their families to better anticipate what treatment might entail. The disease is explained along with potential side effects, tests, key evaluation moments and expectations for the years following treatment.

The Children’s Mercy team works together to help patients feel comfortable while in the hospital.

Pictured here: Alan Gamis, MD, Section Chief, Oncology with patient, Kellen.

At the Forefront

Whether participating in or leading clinical research trials, oncologists at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics ensure their patients have access to the very latest in cancer treatment.

Each child receiving cancer treatment at Children’s Mercy is registered in the national Childhood Cancer Registry, and nearly 50 percent are enrolled in appropriate clinical research trials. Clinical trials offer participants the opportunity to have access to treatment that otherwise would not be available.

Children who participate are also contributing to medical research by taking an active role in improving health care for others.

“Clinical trials represent our most advanced therapy available,” says Alan Gamis, MD, Section Chief, Oncology at Children’s Mercy. “We have approximately 100 trials open at any time and 150 to 170 new patients each year.”

Dr. Gamis is the Chair of the Children’s Oncology Group’s myeloid leukemia research team, the National Cancer Institute’s cooperative group for childhood cancer research trials.
An Expert Team

A team of experts oversees the treatment of each child at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and monitors their progress for years to come. Dedicated specialists from a variety of disciplines team up to provide comprehensive cancer care.

Areas of expertise include:

- chaplaincy
- child life
- nursing
- nutrition
- pathology
- pediatric subspecialists
- pharmacy
- psychology
- radiation therapy
- radiology
- social work
- surgery

Education about the treatment process is especially important for parents. The eyes and ears for doctors, parents—who tend to know their children better than anyone else—can inform the oncology team the moment something is wrong.

“We know everything about our patients, and they know us,” says Dr. Gamis. “It is our job to bring patients and families up to speed to become members of our team and informed participants in their care.”

Valuable Players

Treatment for cancer is very intense with complications possible from radiation, chemotherapy and surgery. The bond between patient and team members can help children get through tougher aspects of their care.

Child life specialists—instrumental to helping pediatric cancer patients maintain a semblance of normalcy—are an important aspect of care at Children’s Mercy. They make a focused effort to understand what each child is going through and help patients express their feelings and perceptions during treatment. Efforts of child life specialists can decrease anxiety and reduce the need for sedatives during difficult treatments.

Special care taken by pediatric specialists from every department put the comfort of patients first. Private rooms with refrigerators, televisions and DVD players strive to make children and family members more comfortable during their stay with us.

Twenty-five private rooms, two playrooms and a parent room are part of the high-efficiency particulate air-filtered space that makes up the Oncology Unit. HEPA filters block airborne particles that can cause infections or lead to complications. Five of those rooms have even greater air-filtration methods in the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit.

Reaching the Goal Line

The oncology team at Children’s Mercy is curing 80 to 85 percent of children in their care. The next step is long-term follow-up and managing side effects, identifying them early based on their likelihood to occur due to treatments and inherent risk. Regular surveillance is required to monitor side effects and see that they are addressed.

This is where the whole team comes into play, monitoring each patient’s condition in the clinic and at home. Members of the team communicate with the family 24/7 and coordinate with a variety of home health companies as directed by insurance.

“The team approach permits us to care for the entire child,” says Dr. Gamis. “This way, parents do not have to go out and seek other specialists. A variety of medical specialties are incorporated into each child’s team as needed.”

For more information about our team approach to cancer care, visit www.childrensmercy.org and search for “oncology team.”

Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics was awarded the Commission on Cancer Outstanding Achievement Award in 2006—the only freestanding children’s hospital to receive the honor. A multidisciplinary program by the American College of Surgeons, the Commission on Cancer determines the awards based on performance in six areas: cancer committee leadership, cancer data management, clinical services, research, community outreach and quality improvement.
Caring for Our Tiniest Patients

According to the United States Public Health Services, one in seven babies born in Kansas City is born prematurely. Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics is taking strides toward preventing preterm births and also providing the best possible care to our smallest babies.

When Seconds Count

Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics provides the only 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week ground and air transport service in the region dedicated to neonatal patients. For critically ill newborns, this can make all the difference in getting the care they need for an optimal outcome.

When time is crucial, Children’s Mercy staff can be out the door within eight to 13 minutes and on their way to sick newborns in Missouri, Kansas and the entire Midwest. The transport unit is fully equipped to meet the needs of newborns who require specialized care.

“Our skilled nurses, respiratory therapists and emergency medical technicians are specially trained to deal with the needs of critically ill newborns,” says Sherry McCool, RRT-NPS, MHA, Director of Transport Operations at Children’s Mercy. “At any given time, there are four trained transport teams available who can travel by ambulance, helicopter or plane, each of which is outfitted with technology specifically designed for newborns with abnormal conditions.”

For more information about the unique transport system at Children’s Mercy, visit www.childrensmercy.org and search for “neonatal transport.”

In the State of Missouri, we’ve unfortunately had very high rates of preterm deliveries,” says Howard Kilbride, MD, Section Chief, Neonatology and Director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “We work in community nurseries, provide educational lectures and assist in the establishment of protocols to try and help limit these early deliveries as much as possible.”

The Importance of Prevention

According to Dr. Kilbride, prevention is the best medicine for preterm birth.

“We know that smoking is one of the biggest contributing factors to preterm labor and low birth weight,” says Dr. Kilbride. “It’s critical that we work on education about smoking and drugs—both for community physicians and for women.”

While it would be impossible to completely eliminate prematurity, new innovations in the care of these vulnerable patients may improve long-term outcomes. The specialists at Children’s Mercy remain available as a community resource to assist hospitals with the care of preterm babies and the unexpected complications that sometimes follow these births.

Leading the Way

As a part of these efforts, Children’s Mercy is currently working to develop the Heart of America Center for Infant Pulmonary Disorders. The center will devote its time to developing innovative methods to respond to babies coping with lung development problems.

Another recent addition to the array of services available at Children’s Mercy is a new treatment available for full-term babies suffering from perinatal depression or acidosis.

“Recent international studies have shown that babies who suffer from a lack of oxygen or low blood flow at birth can benefit from cooling therapy,” says Dr. Kilbride. “We believe this therapy will help provide these babies with the best possible outcome, and we’re proud to offer it here at Children’s Mercy.”

For more information about the neonatal services available at Children’s Mercy, visit www.childrensmercy.org.
Food Poisoning Is No Spring Picnic

Spring is in the air, and it’s a great time for an outdoor picnic or barbecue, but don’t let careless food handling and grilling practices spoil your fun. Follow these easy tips:

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Thaw foods completely before grilling for even and thorough cooking.
- Pack your cooler last, and keep beverages and perishables separate.
- Make sure all foods are securely wrapped.
- Remember the two-hour rule: discard any perishable foods left at room temperature for longer than two hours.
- Clean all fruits and vegetables before serving.
- Don’t take leftovers home.

For more ways to prevent food poisoning, visit the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.

Keeping BUGS at Bay

If pesky mosquitoes and other insects start to put a damper on your family’s fun in the sun, it may be time to purchase insect repellent. But which one is right for your kids?

The active ingredient in most insect repellent is DEET, a chemical compound that fights off disease-carrying bugs like mosquitoes and ticks. When using products containing DEET, there are a few things to remember:

- Repellants containing 30 percent DEET are approved for children and teenagers.
- Never use DEET-containing products on children under 2 months of age.
- Do not use too much repellent. Only spray exposed skin, do not spray underneath clothing.
- Wash insect repellents off your children when they return indoors.

For more ideas about how to keep your spring bug-bite free, visit the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.

Teach Your Child to Be BIKE SMART

Every year, 300,000 children are treated in the emergency department for bicycle injuries. Here are a few helpful ways to keep your child safe on two wheels.

- **Wear a helmet.** Your child’s helmet should fit snugly and cover the forehead. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends helmets bearing an approval sticker from the Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- **Choose a safe location.** Children under age 10 should ride on the sidewalk and avoid the street. Teach children to be aware of cars pulling into and out of driveways and to stop at all intersections and look for traffic before crossing.
- **Stay visible.** Wearing neon or fluorescent colors for day riding and reflective materials at night can make your child more visible.

For more bike safety tips, visit www.childrensmercy.org/bikesafety.
Our Online Child Health Library
With Extensive Information On
Over 1,000 Topics.

If you have questions about your child’s health or safety, there is only one name you need to remember: Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics. Our online Child Health Library provides easy access to a wealth of information on child health, safety and parenting topics, as well as our Healthy Kids News columns, Safe & Sound videos and more.

Trustworthy child health information when you need it—it’s just one more reason why, when it’s your child, it has to be Children’s Mercy.