Fun Ways to Avoid Summer Brain Drain

The Top 5 Illnesses That Cause Kids to Miss School

Ensure Your Child Eats a Healthy School Lunch

Check out all our back-to-school tips in the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.
Growing to Meet Your NEEDS

When you’re pondering your child’s health care choices, consider a hospital that is committed to growth and excellence. During the next 15 years, Children’s Mercy Hospital will continue to grow with you and your family.

Children’s Mercy Hospital, which began more than a century ago with one hospital bed, is a continuously growing pediatric medical center and teaching hospital. Now, thanks to a 15-year growth plan, you can glimpse the future of one of America’s leading pediatric centers.

Expanded Services

“We’re creating a facility designed around the expanding demand for our services,” says Jo Stueve, Co-Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President for Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics. “In the first phase, we will be expanding the Emergency Department, and adding space for another magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. We also will have two new leading-edge Cardiac Catheterization labs as well as two new cardiac operating rooms.”

Other Phase I expansions will include additional office space for physicians, new specialty clinics, state-of-the-art research laboratories and the relocation of the hospital’s main laboratory, all housed in an eight-story medical building that will be built on top of an existing parking structure. Phase I also includes the opening of Children’s Mercy East, a specialty outpatient/urgent care center in Independence, Mo.

“We want our services to be both family friendly and efficient,” says Stueve. “We have received feedback from area pediatricians and our Family Advisory Board and have considered the needs of our community. By doubling our size, this expansion will give families the space to grow with us.”

For more information on the Children’s Mercy Hospital expansion, visit www.childrensmercy.org/expansion.

An Ounce of Prevention

Protect your children by ensuring their vaccines are up-to-date before heading back to school.

School immunization laws were first established to control outbreaks of smallpox. Many adults may remember receiving polio or measles vaccines at school in the 1950s to avert outbreaks of these infections. Subsequently, all 50 states enacted school immunization laws to ensure children were protected from polio, measles, mumps, German measles, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. All but three states require that chickenpox immunization also be complete before kindergarten entry. Hepatitis B vaccine mandates first appeared in 1993 in Massachusetts for children in day care, and subsequently 44 states enacted elementary school mandates, including Missouri in 1997 and Kansas in 2004.

Why worry about hepatitis B?

More than 2 billion people are infected with hepatitis B worldwide. Hepatitis B is a serious liver infection caused by a virus that attacks liver cells, and up to 25 percent of those infected will develop liver failure, cirrhosis (scarring) or cancer of the liver.

Vaccines to the Rescue

The good news is that hepatitis B can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine of three doses given in the first six months of life. Since a national strategy to initiate hepatitis B vaccination to all babies at birth was implemented in the United States in 1991, the rate of new hepatitis B infections has declined by approximately 80 percent.

“The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all infants, children and adolescents up to age 18 receive the hepatitis B vaccine,” says Mary Anne Jackson, MD, Section Chief, Infectious Disease at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “As the first vaccine that can prevent liver cancer, this is a gift we can give our kids that will last a lifetime.”

To learn more about vaccinations, visit www.childrensmercy.org/childhealth and click on “Safe & Sound Videos” to view our short video.
Help reduce the brain drain your child may experience over summer vacation. Involving your child in activities that are fun and educational can keep her reading, math and science skills sharp.

Way to Play
Just as you would help your children with homework during the school year, educational activities during the summer require parents’ participation. Here are some ideas to keep your child learning while still having fun.

Reading and Writing
- Read to your child or have an older child read to you.
- Visit your local library and enroll your children in the summer reading program.
- Encourage preteens and young adolescents to journal—whether to capture experiences on a specific trip or chronicle day-to-day thoughts and events.

Science and Math
- Cook a meal together to use math in a functional way with delicious results! For older children, double or half the recipe and let them figure out the new quantities required.
- Help your child build a fort, doghouse or birdhouse to put math skills into action and create something your child can be proud of.
- A lemonade stand teaches economic principles of supply and demand as well as creates an opportunity for counting. Children also can employ their creative skills for advertising and decorating the stand and use math skills to make the lemonade.
- Plant a garden in the yard or in a window box to show your child how seeds develop and the effects of weather, water and fertilizer on growth.

History and Geography
- Help your child map the route of a family vacation, marking progress as you drive or adding stickers to show where you’ve stopped along the way.
- Take family field trips to museums, zoos, gardens or local historic sites.
- Learn state capitals, countries and continents by playing geography-specific games.

“When selecting activities for your child, be sure and pick a subject he enjoys and excels at as well as areas where he can improve,” says Carolyn McIntire, Certified Child Life Specialist at Children’s Mercy. “Just don’t overdo it. Parents should remember it’s summer—a time for children to take a break and regroup before another tough year of school.”

www.childrensmercy.org/childhealth
Afterschool begins, it’s only a matter of
time before your child comes down with
the latest illness of the month. In fact,
kids miss 164 million school days every year
due to illness.

**Practical Prevention**
Children come in contact with germs every
day, so even the most cautious behavior
cannot prevent illness at all times. While
exposure to different germs ultimately builds
a stronger immune system, this fact does not
make sickness easier to deal with, especially
when it causes children to miss school. But
don’t worry, there are ways to help your child
stay out of the doctor’s office and in class.

“Hand washing is the single most effective
way to keep children healthy,” says Kenneth
Wible, MD, Section Chief, General Pediatrics
at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics
and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the
UMKC School of Medicine. “They also should
cover their sneezes and coughs, avoid sharing
personal items, such as toothbrushes or lip
balm, and refrain from eating and drinking
after others.”

**The Top 5 Offenders**
The most common illnesses for school-age
children are:

1. **Common Cold**
   Colds are spread through viruses that affect
   the upper respiratory tract, including the nose,
throat and sinuses, and often leave children feeling
   groggy. A child may suffer from colds up to 10
times each year due to numerous viral strains,
and a child usually takes longer to recover than
an adult.

   Cold symptoms include runny nose, cough, fever
   and sore throat. Colds don’t respond to antibiotics
   and symptoms may last as long as two weeks.
   You can give your child pain relievers and fever
   reducers and ensure she gets plenty of rest to
   help her feel more comfortable. If she does not
   feel better after two weeks or if her fever does
   not break within four days, consider making an
   appointment with her pediatrician.

2. **Stomach Flu**
   This condition can be caused by a virus,
such as the rotavirus, or food poisoning.
   Common symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea,
   fever and stomachache. Diarrhea may
   last as long as two weeks, although
   vomiting tends to subside after a few days.
   Medication does not help the stomach
   flu and may actually worsen symptoms.
   The biggest concern regarding the
   stomach flu is that symptoms can lead
to dehydration. Warning signs of
dehydration include headaches,
dizziness, dry mouth and
muscle weakness. To avoid
this potentially serious
complication, give your
child fluids such as
Pedialyte and
avoid juices
or sodas.

3. **Ear Infection**
   Middle ear
   infections
   can be caused by
   viruses or bacteria
   or may be triggered
   by respiratory
   infections. When
a child becomes congested from a cold or allergies, the Eustachian tube that drains fluid out of the middle ear can become clogged due to increased pressure. This blockage can lead to fluid buildup, allowing germs to multiply.

Symptoms include ear pain, fever and irritability. Middle ear infections often go untreated because they tend to go away on their own. However, if the infection is severe, medication can clear up the infection.

Pink Eye
Also known as conjunctivitis, pink eye occurs when the membrane covering the white part of the eye and lining the inner eyelid becomes inflamed. This condition can be caused by a virus, allergies and even trauma. Pink eye is highly contagious and causes eye redness, itching, swelling and green or yellow drainage, which can be cleared using cotton balls. Warm compresses—or cool ones if the condition is allergy-related—also may reduce your child’s discomfort. Antibiotic eye drops are most commonly used to treat pink eye.

Ear Infections
Some children suffer from chronic ear infections due to fluid buildup in the middle ear. An ear, nose and throat specialist may place a small tube in the eardrum to help drain excess fluid and prevent recurring infections.

Stomach Flu
Dehydration may result from stomach flu symptoms. If your child has a dry mouth, does not produce tears while crying and does not urinate at least every six to eight hours, call your pediatrician immediately.

Sore Throat
Sore throats can be linked to viruses, bacteria or allergies and often occur in conjunction with other symptoms, such as a runny nose or cough. Treatment for sore throat depends on the source of infection. Most cases are caused by viruses, which do not improve with medication and usually clear up without treatment in a few days. If the sore throat is caused by a bacterial infection, however, your child’s pediatrician may prescribe antibiotics.

To comfort your child, you can give him pain relievers, throat sprays or lozenges. Gargling with warm salt water may also help.

Visit our Back-to-School site at www.childrensmercy.org/backtoschool for information on how to help prepare your children for their next year of school.

Kids miss a total of 164 million school days every year due to illness.

Colds
Cleaning surfaces that contain germs, such as desks and doorknobs, and teaching children to wash their hands often will help prevent the spread of cold-causing germs.

Pink Eye
If your child’s eye has improved after using antibiotics for 24 hours, she should not be contagious and may return to school. If the symptoms do not improve and include severe pain or decreased vision, see your pediatrician.

Sore Throat
If your child’s symptoms include fever, a red or swollen throat and infected tonsils, call your pediatrician to have your child tested for strep throat.
**5 Tips for a Healthy Lunch Line**

Nervous about your child getting nutritious lunches at school? Here are five ways to make sure your child is getting the most out of the school cafeteria.

1. **Have lunch together.** “Go to lunch with your child,” says Shelly Summar, registered dietitian and Weight Management Program Coordinator for Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics. “This allows you to have a better understanding of what healthy food options are available so you can help your child make wise choices.”

2. **Call the cafeteria or school food service and ask about healthy changes in the menu.** “For example, some cafeterias are using pizza dough made with 50 percent whole-wheat flour,” Summar says. “But you’d have to call to find out because they might not advertise it.”

3. **Set goals with your child for eating certain foods at lunch.** Out of all the food groups on the tray, at least one food, preferably more, should be a fruit or vegetable.

4. **Monitor desserts.** If you feel like your child is eating too many sweets, discuss cutting back. “If a child is having dessert four times a week, maybe he or she should cut back to three,” says Summar. “Your child’s activity level should be considered when deciding how often to allow dessert.”

5. **Check what your child is actually eating.** Many schools can give you a printout showing what your child has purchased in the cafeteria. For more healthy eating tips, visit the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org and search for “school lunch.”

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**Brown Bag Brainstorm**

Sending a healthy home-packed lunch to school can help children eat right and maintain their energy throughout the day.

Many children don’t have access to a refrigerator or microwave at school, meaning if you don’t plan ahead, their lunches can be soggy by noon. The secret to lunches your child will enjoy is to find healthy meals that will remain fresh and nutritious when lunchtime rolls around.

“It’s best to avoid prepackaged lunches,” says Shelly Summar, registered dietitian and Weight Management Program Coordinator for Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics. “They typically have more calories, are higher in sodium and have less nutritional value than freshly made lunches.”

**Creative Choices**

Here are some tips for healthy lunches that travel well.

- Send portions in bite-sized pieces younger children can easily manage.
- Cut sandwiches into fun shapes with cookie cutters.
- Try wrap sandwiches with whole-grain tortillas, lean meat and vegetables. Pinwheels are fun too: take whole-wheat bread, cut off the crust, flatten bread with a rolling pin, place cheese or peanut butter and jelly on the bread, roll up and cut into wheels.
- Have your child help make her lunch. Give her some choice within the food groups.
- Move beyond sandwiches: stuff pita bread instead, or make meat-and-cheese kabobs or fruit-and-cheese kabobs.
- Make fun, interactive food like dips for fruits or cheese-and-cracker sandwiches.

For more information about healthy lunches, visit www.childrensmercy.org.
Cribs, Cradles and Car Seats, Oh My!

Every year, nearly 60,000 children are injured by cribs, car seats and other baby gear. That doesn’t have to be the case. A few simple steps can ensure your child doesn’t become a statistic.

Car seats and carriers cause more than 14,000 injuries per year. Contrary to what you might think, most of these injuries take place outside of a moving car. To keep your child safe in a car seat, avoid putting the carrier on high surfaces where it could fall and make sure the handle is locked into place before picking up the seat.

For hand-me-downs, including cribs and changing tables, check for cracked paint, splinters and rough edges. Also, research current safety recommendations to make sure older equipment is still safe to use.

For more on childhood safety, visit www.childrensmercy.org/childhealth and click on “Childhood Safety.”

Children’s Health Information at Your Fingertips

Have a question about your child’s health? Visit the Child Health Library on the Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics Web site for in-depth information on more than 1,500 different topics.

The recently renovated library includes podcasts, video and audio interviews, and additional resources to provide parents and other caretakers with relevant information about their children’s health. For medical conditions such as fever, library entries contain helpful tips on treating the condition, in case you can’t see a doctor immediately.

To access the Child Health Library, visit www.childrensmercy.org and click on “Your Child’s Health.”

Safety First

Follow these tips to keep your kids happy and healthy this summer:

Slather on sunscreen. Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher before heading out into the sun and reapply every two hours.

Prevent food poisoning. Don’t leave food outside for more than two hours or one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Ward off swimmer’s ear. Have your child wear earplugs and put a few drops of rubbing alcohol into each ear after a long swim to help water evaporate.

Keep hydrated. By the time your child realizes she is thirsty, she may already be dehydrated, so encourage drinking fluids during hot summer days.
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OUR ONLINE CHILD HEALTH LIBRARY
WITH EXTENSIVE INFORMATION ON OVER 1000 TOPICS.

When kids go back to school, it’s a good time for parents to go back to school, too. The Children’s Mercy online Child Health Library is a refresher course for subjects such as healthy eating habits, exercise, vaccines, establishing good study habits and more. It’s just another reason Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics is more than a hospital – it’s the first place parents turn.

Check out our Child Health Library at childrensmercy.org/childhealth.

www.childrensmercy.org