Keeping Your Child’s Spine in Line

Marshmallow or Mothball?
Some household poisons can look like candy

Granddaddy Day Care
The benefits of having your parents as day care providers

Check out our healthy living tips in the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.
The actual culprit is the more than 200 cold-causing viruses that spread through schools, churches and public places and into your home. “The main reason children are more susceptible to colds during the winter is because they spend more time indoors and have closer contact with infected children,” says Kenneth Wible, MD, Medical Director of the Pediatric Care Center, Section Chief, General Pediatrics at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine.

Keep the Cold Away

Follow these three tips to protect your children from colds this winter:

- **Wash your hands.** Colds can be spread through touching the skin of infected children or touching surfaces already saturated with germs. Having your children wash their hands for at least 15 seconds is the best way to get rid of pesky germs.
- **Eat healthy foods.** Make sure your children are getting foods packed with the vitamins and nutrients they need to encourage strong immune systems.
- **Limit exposure.** Encourage your child to avoid close contact with friends who may be experiencing cold symptoms.

For more information about cold prevention, visit the Child Health Library at [www.childrensmercy.org](http://www.childrensmercy.org) and search for “colds.”
Today’s parents are often hard-working professionals who balance work with a full home life. Day care centers, especially for parents who have multiple children, can be expensive. “Grandparents as daily caregivers can be a really wonderful arrangement for everyone involved,” says Brian Belden, PhD, Developmental and Child Psychology at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “This really creates a close bond between grandparents and grandchildren, and can strengthen the bond of the parent and grandparents.”

The Exception

According to Dr. Belden, the main potential problem occurs when child care arrangements aren’t mutually agreeable. Sometimes parents are forced into a situation in which they need the help of a grandparent, and in those cases it can be stressful and unhappy for all the parties involved.

“Another potentially difficult situation occurs when the parents and the grandparents have had a historically difficult relationship, because problems can arise,” explains Dr. Belden. “That can be confusing for the child and hard on the adults as well.”

Starting Out

If parents are interested in beginning this unique child care arrangement, one of the first steps is to open the lines of communication with the grandparents who are prospective day care providers.

“It’s likely that there will be similarities in lifestyle and discipline strategies, but limits and concerns should be discussed honestly and openly,” says Dr. Belden. “Sometimes it’s hard to tell your parents what to do, but it’s a happier situation overall if communication is clear.”

Parents should also discuss responsibilities and logistics, including whether the care will be provided at the child’s home or the grandparents’ home and what kinds of outings are approved. Finances also can be an issue, so clarify early on whether money will be exchanging hands.

Do you have questions about child care? Visit the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org and search for “child care.”

Many grandparents love nothing more than to spend time with their grandchildren. And for grandchildren, seeing grandparents is often a special treat. Taking an already happy relationship and making it a regular, daily affair can help save both stress and money for busy parents.

“In most families, having grandparents be your child’s day care provider is a great arrangement. Remember, however, that in the long run—with regard to both big issues and minor details—you are responsible for the final decisions about your children.”

—Brian Belden, PhD, Developmental and Child Psychology at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine
The Spine Center staff consists of two orthopaedic surgeons with specialties in pediatric spine conditions, two nurse practitioners and a research coordinator. Because every child is different, the staff is well-equipped to deal with a variety of spinal deformities and injuries.

“Here at the Spine Center, we do a couple hundred procedures a year exclusively on pediatric spines, which allows us to develop considerable experience,” says Richard Schwend, MD, FAAP, Orthopaedic Surgery at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Clinical Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the UMKC School of Medicine and the KU Medical Center. “Parents should feel confident in knowing that we have taken care of other children facing similar situations.”

Problems with the Growing Spine

You’ve probably heard of scoliosis—a sideways curve of the spine. Scoliosis is the most common spinal condition among children but is far from the only condition the Spine Center treats. Some children present with kyphosis, which is a back to front curve of the spine. Both conditions are found in children and adolescents from birth through the late teen years.

The Spine Center also provides care for other congenital and development deformities, as well as injuries to the spine. Patients can be treated in a variety of ways, ranging from braces to surgical procedures and implantation of spinal rods.

“What we truly specialize in at Children’s Mercy is the growing spine—whether it is a congenital problem, something that’s developed over time or a condition related to a tumor, infection or injury,” says Nigel Price, MD, Director of Spine Deformity Services at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Assistant Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the UMKC School of Medicine and the KU Medical Center. “We take care of the full spectrum of spine problems, from head to tailbone, in growing patients.”

Going Beyond the Hospital Walls

The Spine Center is not only committed to providing patients with the best in pediatric spine care but also in helping promote advancements in the field in general.
Problems with the spine during childhood and adolescence are usually the result of a deformity. Injuries from car accidents, however, are an increasing problem. Protect your child by making sure he or she is properly restrained while in the car.

“It is absolutely essential for children and teens to be wearing restraints in an age-appropriate way,” says Nigel Price, MD, Director of Spine Deformity Services at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics. “Every year, I see children with serious spinal injuries resulting from a car accident where the child was either unrestrained or under-restrained.”

The Missouri Child Passenger Safety Law requires the following:

- **Child safety seat**—Children ages 4 and younger, or less than 40 pounds, must be restrained in a child safety seat.
- **Booster seat**—Children ages 4 to 7 who weigh at least 40 pounds must be in a child safety or booster seat until they weigh 80 pounds or are 4’9” tall.
- **Seat belt**—Everyone ages 8 and older, or weighing at least 80 pounds, or at least 4’9” tall, is required to be buckled in with the vehicle’s safety belt.

Is your child passenger safety seat properly installed? Why not be absolutely sure by having a certified child safety technician check it out? Visit [www.childrensmercy.org/buckleupkc](http://www.childrensmercy.org/buckleupkc) for more information.

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**Building Strong Bones**

Your child’s bones grow throughout childhood and adolescence. So how can you make sure he or she gets the right amount of calcium and vitamin D necessary for strong, healthy bones?

**Vitamin D**

How much your child needs depends on his or her age. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children and teens have at least 400 units of vitamin D per day. To obtain vitamin D through food, turn to vitamin D-fortified milk, a cup of fortified cereal, eggs or oily fish such as tuna, mackarel and sardines.

**Calcium**

AAP recommendations for calcium intake also depend on the child’s age. Between the ages of 4 and 8, the AAP recommends 800 mg of calcium per day, or about three servings of milk. Because bones grow most rapidly between ages 9 and 18, calcium needs to increase as well—the AAP recommends children in this age range have 1,300 mg of calcium per day.

“By staying involved in current research and developments, we are able to keep up with the latest treatment techniques for pediatric spine problems,” says Dr. Schwend. “We can handle more complex conditions that children may have as a result of our ongoing role in research. In this way, we help not only our current patients but also patients in the future.”

For more information about the Spine Center at Children’s Mercy, call (816) 234-3693.

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Nigel Price, MD, Director of Spine Deformity Services

Richard Schwend, MD, FAAP, Orthopaedic Surgery

As part of this effort, the Spine Center is currently participating in two nationwide studies—the Bracing in Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis Trial (BrAIST) and a study of genetic markers for scoliosis with the Stowers Institute for Medical Research.
Thanks to Child Life Services available at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics, you won’t have to worry about how your child will cope with being in the hospital. “We bring normalization to the hospital experience by offering everything from play opportunities to explanations of procedures that children can understand,” explains Stacey Koening, Director of Child Life, Volunteer Services and Family Centered Care for Children’s Mercy. “We want to offer children as many choices and as much support as we possibly can.”

All the Child Life Specialists at Children’s Mercy are trained in child development, meaning they are equipped to offer children age-appropriate support.

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**Improving Your Child’s Hospital Visit**

Your daughter has to go to the hospital for a procedure, and she’s nervous. As a mother, you’re worried about how she’ll react to the new surroundings.

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**Safe or Toxic?**

Most parents know to keep dangerous household items out of the reach of small hands and fingers. But what happens when a toxic or poisonous product looks startlingly similar to your child’s favorite candy?

Poisons that resemble harmless products are commonly referred to as look-alikes. The similarities can exist with the product itself, with the packaging or in some cases both.

“Store medicines and household products in a safe place and locked up if necessary, where children can’t see or reach them,” says Gary Wasserman, DO, Section Chief, Medical Toxicology at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “Also, keep products in their original containers, use child-resistant packaging, and keep the number of your regional Poison Control Center handy (1-800-222-1222).”

Explain to your children that while some products may not look dangerous, they are, and it’s important to ask an adult before eating or drinking anything.

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Here are a few examples of look-alikes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poison</th>
<th>Look-alikes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothballs</td>
<td>Mini-marshmallows or gumball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine oil floor cleaner</td>
<td>Apple juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antibiotic ointment</td>
<td>Cake icing tubes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powdered cleaner</td>
<td>Parmesan cheese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children’s Mercy Healthy Kids University offers a free educational presentation on the dangers of toxins titled, “House of Poison.” To schedule this presentation for your school or community group, call (816) 234-3748.

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Thanks to Child Life Services available at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics, you won’t have to worry about how your child will cope with being in the hospital. “We bring normalization to the hospital experience by offering everything from play opportunities to explanations of procedures that children can understand,” explains Stacey Koening, Director of Child Life, Volunteer Services and Family Centered Care for Children’s Mercy. “We want to offer children as many choices and as much support as we possibly can.”

All the Child Life Specialists at Children’s Mercy are trained in child development, meaning they are equipped to offer children age-appropriate support.

“Before we even see a child, we’re already thinking about where he or she is developmentally and how we can help him thrive at the hospital,” says Melissa Pulis, Assistant Director of Child Life, Volunteer Services and Family Centered Care for Children’s Mercy. “For example, we understand very young children enjoy magical play, so we base our interactions with the child on that idea. Our services help children learn what to expect from their visit, which helps them recover more quickly.”

Mercy Bear’s Big Adventures are online presentations that can help show your children what to expect during their visit to Children’s Mercy. Visit www.childrensmercy.org/storybooktours to view a free presentation.
Avoid Pet Turtle Regret

If your child has been begging for a pet turtle, suggest a goldfish instead. Turtles commonly carry a bacteria called Salmonella, which can be transmitted to humans through contact with the animals’ skin or droppings. Salmonella causes diarrhea, fever and vomiting, and can be fatal to young children.

Despite a federal law that bans the sale of small turtles, there has been an upsurge of turtle purchases in recent years. Between May 2007 and January 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received reports of 103 Salmonella infections in 33 states, most of which resulted from exposure to turtles.

If you do have turtles in the house, keep them out of food preparation areas and always wash your hands after handling them.

For more information about pets and health, visit www.childrensmercy.org and search for “pet safety.”
REASON #12

For kids, winter is the time to go sledding, build a snowman or have a snowball fight. But thanks to the slippery winter ice, it can also be the time for accidents. So if one of the gifts of the season turns out to be a broken bone, don’t worry. Because even if his steering fails, we’ll be there to fix the breaks.

There are a million reasons to choose Children’s Mercy, but really, all you need is one. When it’s your child, it has to be Children’s Mercy.