Burn Safety 101
Simple Steps You Can Take to Keep Kids Safe

Chew on This
The Surprising Benefits of Gum

Help Your Teen Succeed on the SAT

Check out our healthy living tips in the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.
Dashing Through the Snow

During the icy winter months, vehicle safety for your child goes beyond following car seat safety rules—it also involves you being a safe driver.

As snow and ice appear on the roads, careful driving becomes increasingly important. “The obvious winter driving risks involve wet or icy roads and low visibility from darkness, rain and snow,” says John Cowden, MD, General Pediatrics at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “Safe driving strategies include leaving extra time for car trips, driving slowly and defensively, and remembering that being a few minutes late is better than losing or injuring a child because of impatience or hurry.”

In addition to being weather-minded, check out these pointers to keep your child safe in any vehicle.

In the Car
All children ages 12 and younger should ride in the back seat. Infants weighing less than 20 pounds and younger than 1 year old should ride in a rear-facing car seat. Children younger than age 4 should ride in a forward-facing car seat. Booster seats should be used for children older than age 4 who are between 40 and 80 pounds and under 4’ 9”.

On the Bus
Most school bus-related injuries occur in the loading zone, not while riding the bus. To keep your child safe, ensure he knows to:
- wait for the bus three giant steps away from the curb
- never walk behind a bus
- wait until the bus comes to a complete stop to get on or off.

For more car safety tips, visit www.childrensmercy.org/buckleupkc.

Donating Life

January is National Blood Donor Month. In honor of this special occasion and the new year, consider making a resolution to donate blood. It could save the life of a child.

Often, patients who come to Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics need donated blood in order to heal. The Children’s Mercy Blood Bank is prepared to meet those needs.

“Because we are a Level I Pediatric Trauma Center, many patients who are brought here after a car wreck or other event need blood in order to replenish their bodies,” says Steven Buckley, MT (ASCP), Blood Bank Supervisor for Children’s Mercy. “Also, many of our patients who come here for procedures such as open heart surgery, as well as children who need bone marrow transplants, often need blood from the Blood Bank.”

Overcoming Fears
Many prospective donors are kept away from donation centers because they are afraid. Giving blood, however, isn’t a frightening experience and isn’t painful beyond the initial stick.

“I always tell people that giving blood doesn’t really hurt, and many people are surprised how fast and easy it is,” Buckley says. “Blood donation also allows members of the community the chance to make a difference in the life of a child.”

Donate blood today! Visit www.savealifenow.org or contact the Community Blood Center at (888) 647-4040 to learn how.
Chew Your Way to Straight A’s?

Before you tell your child to spit out her gum, you may want to reconsider. Not only can chewing gum help keep teeth clean, it may actually help your child stay focused at school.

Chewing gum has been a classroom nuisance for teachers for generations, but it may actually improve students’ school performance. An experiment by researchers at the Baylor College of Medicine found that during a period of 14 weeks, eighth graders who chewed gum while doing homework and during tests had a 3 percent increase in standardized math test scores and higher final grades than those who did not. The study also revealed that students who chewed gum required fewer classroom breaks and stayed quiet longer. Since the Wrigley Science Institute funded the study, some experts suggest more research is needed. However, several previous studies have linked chewing gum to higher levels of alertness and concentration.

Toothy Benefits

Regardless of whether or not gum can affect your child’s study habits, the sticky substance does have other health benefits.

“Chewing gum following meals can help prevent tooth decay, as the saliva produced by chewing protects teeth by washing away acids and bacteria,” says Robin Onikul, DDS, Chair of the Department of Dentistry at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatric Dentistry at the UMKC School of Dentistry. “The American Dental Association [ADA] has approved many sugarless gums for the prevention of tooth decay.”

A gum company earns the ADA seal by producing scientific evidence that the gum provides oral health benefits such as reducing plaque acids, promoting remineralization of tooth enamel, reducing cavities or reducing gingivitis. Gum manufacturers must provide the results of both laboratory and clinical studies as supporting evidence.

Many sugarless gum products contain xylitol, a natural sugar alcohol that has been proven to help prevent cavities by inhibiting the growth of tooth-decaying bacteria. A study revealed that new mothers who chew gum with xylitol can dramatically reduce the amount of bacteria they carry, thus reducing the transmission of the tooth-decaying bacteria to their children.

Chewing gum is not a substitute to brushing and flossing, however. The ADA recommends brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and flossing at least once a day.

For more toothy tips, check out the Child Health Library at www.childrensmercy.org.

Did You Know?

• There are more than 1,000 varieties of gum sold in the United States.
• The largest bubble gum bubble was 23 inches in diameter, blown by Susan Montgomery Williams in 1994.
• The longest gum wrapper chain was made by Gary Duschl of Virginia Beach, Va. Gary started the chain in 1965, and today, the chain stretches more than 61,500 feet (11 miles) and contains almost 1.5 million wrappers!
Many people associate burns with fire and forget the other ways we can burn ourselves—such as scalds, chemical burns, sunburns and electric burns. In fact, scalds—burns caused by hot bath water, steam and hot foods or liquids—are the number one cause of burn injury among children.

“It’s easy for adults to innocently overlook potential burn dangers for children in the home, such as a hot beverage on a low coffee table,” says Ronald Sharp, MD, Section Chief, General and Thoracic Surgery and Director of Burns and Trauma at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Surgery at the UMKC School of Medicine. “However, taking preventive steps and being aware of the most dangerous areas of the house for burns—the kitchen and bathroom—will help ensure a safer home for your children.”

Kitchen Safety
From hot ovens to boiling grease, the kitchen is a land mine of danger zones for young children.

“Small children are both curious and hands-on,” says Dr. Sharp. “We see a lot of serious burns from children reaching up and pulling boiling pots down or kids not quite tall enough to reach the microwave getting hot liquids, such as soup, out...
If Your Child Is Burned…

... run cool water over the affected area within 30 seconds of initial contact for approximately three to five minutes. Do not use mayonnaise, butter, grease or other home remedies on burns—these home solutions can increase the risk of infection. For burns larger than two or three inches in diameter or that cover more than 10 percent of the body, seek medical assistance.

To protect your child, follow these safety tips:

- Turn pot handles to face the center or back of the stovetop to keep them away from small hands.
- Never allow a young child to help you put items in the oven.
- If your child wants to help cook, let him assist you with the preparations at a table or countertop away from the stove. Once cooking or baking commences, small children should leave the kitchen.
- Avoid using tablecloths or large placemats, as young children can pull on them and overturn a plate of food or a hot beverage.

Bathroom Safety

Young children’s skin is much more sensitive than an adult’s. Therefore, the temperature of hot bath water feels different to you than it does to your child.

“Typically, water heaters are set way too high for young children,” says Dr. Sharp. “It only takes seconds for a child to be scalded if the water temperature is set too high.”

The chart below shows how quickly hot water can scald a child:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Temperature</th>
<th>Time It Takes to Cause a Serious Burn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150°F</td>
<td>2 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140°F</td>
<td>6 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125°F</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Stop, Drop and Roll” 101

Teach your children how to stop, drop and roll as demonstrated by Mercy Bear.

Did You Know?

Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics operates the only designated Level I Pediatric Trauma Center in addition to the only Burn Unit devoted exclusively to pediatric patients between St. Louis and Denver.
To protect your kids from harmful household substances such as personal care products, cleaning substances and analgesics, you should poison-proof not only your home, but your child’s grandparents’ homes as well.

“About 20 percent of significant exposures to poisons in young children are from grandparents’ medicines,” says Gary S. Wasserman, DO, Section Chief, Medical Toxicology at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “Seniors, who take an average of five prescriptions and two over-the-counter medications daily, often leave medications out so they don’t forget to take them. Ensure these substances are kept out of reach of children.”

Maintaining Safety
Be sure to re-evaluate the home for potential hazards as your child grows.
“Travel around the home and look at potential dangers from the level of a young child, especially in the kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, laundry area and garage or basement,” says Dr. Wasserman. “Use child safety latches on cabinets, and keep all medicines and household products in their original containers with child-resistant closures.”

Call the Poison Control Center at (800) 222-1222 if you suspect your child has been poisoned. For more information about poison-proofing your home, visit www.childrensmercy.org/safeathome.

Test Time Tips
Taking the SAT is a rite of passage for high school students, but today, test takers have more to worry about than scoring high enough to be accepted to college. Do your part to help your teen perform well by helping decrease her stress.

“T he SAT stakes are higher than they used to be,” says Daryl A. Lynch, MD, Section Chief, Adolescent Medicine at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Professor of Pediatrics at the UMKC School of Medicine. “For teens, the question is no longer, ‘Can I get in?’ but ‘How much can I earn in scholarships based on my score?’”
To reduce your young scholar’s stress at test time, encourage her to consider the following tips:
• Take care of your body by getting enough sleep and practicing good nutrition habits.
• To ease anxiety, take deep breaths and think of a memory in which you’re totally relaxed, such as a moment from a vacation.
• Arrange to take the test at the same time as a friend, and ride to the testing center together.

How You Can Help
The most important thing parents can do for their test takers is offer support, whether that means having breakfast ready on the morning of the exam or rubbing their shoulders to relieve tension.
To find a physician at Children’s Mercy who can speak with your teen about anxiety, visit www.childrensmercy.org and select “Find a Doctor.”
A Real Power Nap

Although it may be difficult to get your little one to settle down for a nap, doing so may provide her with benefits beyond rest. Because sleep is a major requirement for young children, daily naps are usually necessary for children to get adequate amounts of rest. However, a recent study shows that daytime naps may also help reduce hyperactivity, anxiety and depression in children.

In the study, 62 children were examined and categorized as either napping or non-napping children. Researchers found that those children who did not participate in daytime naps had higher levels of anxiety, hyperactivity and depression than the children who did take naps. An additional benefit? Daytime naps give parents the opportunity to unwind and relax.

A Story Before Hospital Time

Whether your little one is anxious about an exam room visit, same-day surgery or overnight stay at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics, Mercy Bear can help. As a part of the Children’s Mercy Web site, Mercy Bear guides you and your child through various hospital visits. In each Storybook Tour, Mercy Bear explains each step of a hospital visit as well as medical items your child might not be familiar with, such as a stethoscope and blood pressure cuff.

Mercy Bear’s fun and positive outlook can help alleviate fears your child might have about surgery or staying overnight by encouraging your little one to pick his favorite flavor of “sleepy air” and providing an ID bracelet for your child’s stuffed animal.

To have Mercy Bear calm your child’s fears, visit www.childrensmercy.org/storybooktours.

Beating the Winter Blahs

Freezing temperatures and shorter days can significantly reduce the amount of time kids spend playing outside in the winter. To avoid dreaded winter boredom, consider:

- **building an indoor fort.** Help your kids build a fort with blankets, pillows and other items, and let them have a mini picnic inside.
- **making a pinecone birdfeeder.** Coat a pinecone in peanut butter, roll it in birdseed and help your child hang it outside.
- **reading aloud.** Reading aloud to your child is the best way to promote language development and a love of reading. Curl up with blankets, pillows and hot chocolate to make it a memorable experience.
- **turning your living room into a movie theater.** Go all out with theater-style snacks—choose low-calorie popcorn, or have your kids help prepare trail mix for a fun, healthy treat.
“It never occurred to me that a teenager would require a pediatric hospital.”
– Lisa K.

True pediatric expertise. For kids of all ages.

When Jennifer was injured in a horseback riding accident, the doctor at the local ER knew exactly what to do to save her spleen: Transfer her to Children’s Mercy Hospital. Our expertise with children of all ages meant that we could handle her emergency—and help her recover without surgery.

There are a million reasons to choose Children’s Mercy. What’s yours?

Visit MillionReasons.org to share your story.