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Influenza Update

As of late November the CDC was still reporting low influenza activity nationwide. We generally see influenza peak in February and March. Typical symptoms include fever, chills, body aches, sore throat, cough and runny nose.

The best protection against influenza is vaccination. Each year the vaccine is formulated with the most likely strains to cause infection in that given season. Public health officials from the FDA, CDC and World Health Organization study trends and determine the make up of the vaccine each year. It is necessary to get a yearly flu vaccine as the strains of flu change and immunity may wain.

In the United States more than 36,000 people die yearly from influenza. While most mortality from influenza is in the elderly, young children are at increased risk, particularly infants under 6 months. We protect those babies by making sure that all contacts are immunized.

The time for vaccination is now. We offer flu shots on a walk-in basis Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 12 PM and from 2 PM to 4:30 PM. The CDC recommends flu shots for everyone over 6 months of age.



Consider a Charitable Holiday

This holiday season consider teaching your child about the joy of charitable giving. Giving can take on many forms including some that don't stretch the already tight budget. Activities that help those less fortunate or help the environment are good places to start. We have assembled some ideas, but feel free to brainstorm with your children:

Donate Blood Consider giving the gift of life by donating blood. Even teenagers who weigh more than 110 pounds and are over 16 years old can give blood with parental permission. There is always a need for blood, and that need increases around holiday time. Contact Virginia Blood Services at 800-989-GIFT or www.vablood.org.

Donate to the Local Food Bank Let your children help pack bags of unused canned goods from your pantry and drop them off at the Food Bank. Contact Central Virginia Food Bank at 804-237-8602 or www.cvfb.org.

Adopt a Pet Bring an animal into your home from a local animal shelter or rescue animal operation. It is best to wait until after the holidays to introduce an animal into your home. The chaos and excitement of the holiday can be too much for a new pet. Many of these animals are housebroken and just waiting to be adopted. Some of these shelters and some veterinary offices take student volunteers.

Sponsor a Clean-up Over the holiday your children can sponsor a neighborhood clean-up or a local park clean-up. Pick up trash, branches and leaves from public spaces.

Donate a Coat Keep the less fortunate warm this winter. There are a number of charities accepting gently used coats. St. Joseph's Villa, which provides a multitude of services for children and families with special needs including a shelter for homeless mothers and children, accepts donation of coats. Goodwill and the Salvation Army can also make good use of your used coats.

Help the Elderly There may be elderly people in your neighborhood who need some simple chores done like sweeping a walk or raking a yard. They also may appreciate a bag of fresh produce, since they are often unable to get to the store for these items. Sometimes they just appreciate visiting with someone. You can also arrange to have your children visit a local nursing home or long-term care facility. Many of the residents get infrequent visitors and enjoy the company. Your children could arrange to entertain the residents with caroling.

Serve Meals to the Homeless This can be done through one of our local shelters or faith based organizations. Children are often welcome with parents in these endeavors.



HOLIDAY SAFETY



Protect your child this holiday season by selecting gifts with safety in mind. Always try to select age-appropriate toys, and read all instructions that come with toys. Remember to provide adequate supervision at all times. This can be difficult with holiday guests and meal preparation.

For younger children: If packaging indicates that a toy is not recommended for children under three, that means that the toy could pose a risk for your child due to small or sharp parts. Avoid toys with small magnetic pieces for children under age 6 (or under age 10 if there are small children in the household). Avoid toys with strings, straps or cords longer than 7 inches. They can cause strangulation if they get wrapped around your child's neck. Avoid toys that need to be plugged into electrical outlets which can lead to electrical shock or burns. Balloons and small balls can present a real hazard for children under age 8 and according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission were responsible for 47% of toy-related fatalities in 2010.

For older children: Remember no gift is complete without the proper protective gear. Include the helmet as part of the gift. Helmets dramatically reduce the risk of traumatic brain injury. Also include reflectors for front, back and sides of bikes, and elbow and knee pads.

KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

Holiday time means cookies! This is a great time to get your kids involved in the kitchen. There are a multitude of cookie recipes with old family favorites that may have been passed down from generation to generation on old recipe cards with torn and smudged edges to the latest on the internet. The choices can be daunting, from no bake peanut butter cookies, gingerbread cookies and sugar cookies which offer lots of decorating possibilities, to the gooey, rich varieties with lots of chocolate and nuts.

For some challenging and messy but creative fun with the kids, try making a gingerbread house for a beautiful table decoration. There is no limit to how elaborate these masterpieces can be. For free patterns, recipes and assembly instructions that can be downloaded from the internet, visit www.justgingerbread.com. Tip: remember that it is much easier to apply any decorative icing to the sides of the house prior to assembly when they are still lying flat. Candies can be glued on later with 'icing glue'.



HUGUENOT PEDIATRICS MISSION

Huguenot Pediatrics has a mission to provide the highest quality medical care and preventive health measures for your children. We look forward to a long relationship with our patients and their families and the privilege of caring for your children as they mature and grow. We are happy to schedule prenatal visits after hours for expectant parents free of charge to talk with one of our pediatricians and to see our clinical facility. Call us at 794-2299.

FOCUS on PEDIATRIC RESEARCH

Huguenot Pediatrics remains committed to pediatric clinical research. A full-time Clinical Research Coordinator assists the physicians who serve as Investigators on clinical trials. Clinical trials are carefully designed studies involving patient volunteers who may receive investigational treatments, vaccines, or nutritional supplements under close physician supervision. Subjects are currently being enrolled in the following studies:

- Healthy children, 4 to 6 years old, for a DTaP/Polio vaccine study (DTaP and Polio vaccine are required for Kindergarten entry)
- Healthy teenagers for a Menactra (meningitis vaccine) booster study
- Healthy babies, 2 months old, for a combination DTaP/Polio/HIB/Hepatitis B vaccine study
- Otitis Externa study upcoming
- Asthma study upcoming

For more information about these studies or to find out how you and your child can contribute to the advancement of medical science by participating in a clinical trial, please contact Pamela Summers, Clinical Research Coordinator, at 804-794-2299.