

Healthy Kids

April 2009

Spring Ahead!

Spring can be an exciting season for kids and their families. In this issue of *Prescription for Healthy Kids*, we offer tips to help keep your spring season a safe and healthy one.

Seasonal Allergies

For Washington, DC area residents, spring frequently conjures up thoughts of warm weather, sunny days, cherry blossoms, and baseball. However, for many families the warmer weather brings unwanted physical complaints: allergies. Frequently, kids (and adults too) with “allergic rhinitis” develop symptoms of runny nose, nasal congestion, coughing, sore throat and post-nasal drip, while other kids may develop eye allergy symptoms (also known as “allergic conjunctivitis”) such as watery, itchy or burning eyes.

These allergies are almost always caused by pollens produced by flowering plants that are blown into the air. On high-pollen

count days, these pollens can frequently be seen blowing about by the naked eye. Those tend to be the days when the symptoms of allergy-sufferers are the worst.

In the past, treatments were limited. The available antihistamines were effective but usually caused profound drowsiness, which could substantially impact a child’s ability to concentrate in school or to have the energy to socialize with friends. Today there are a variety of antihistamines available that do not cause sedation. In addition, steroid nasal sprays have been shown to be extremely safe and effective for treating chronic nasal allergies.

Continued on back

The Suburban Hospital Pediatric Center is a state-of-the-art facility providing 24-hour emergency care for children from birth to age 17 in a family-centered, kid-friendly environment.

8600 Old Georgetown Rd
Bethesda, MD 20814



Need a
pediatrician?

Call Suburban-
On-Call at
301.896.3939
weekdays from
8:30 am to 5 pm
for a free physician
referral.

Prescription for Healthy Kids
is published by the Public
Affairs Department of
Suburban Hospital.

For further information,
please contact Dr. David
Reitman, Chairman of
Pediatrics, at 301.896.2749 or
dreitman@suburbanhospital.org

www.suburbanhospital.org

Seasonal Allergies *Continued*

For patients whose allergies cannot be controlled with the newer antihistamines or the nasal steroids, allergy shots may still be an option. This therapy requires consultation with an allergist or immunologist and frequently requires injecting small amounts of the offending pollen proteins under the skin so that the body can become desensitized to the allergy.

For many children, seasonal allergies may be a nuisance. However, poorly controlled allergies can lead to ear infections, sinus

infections, asthma exacerbations and/or decreased quality of life for some kids. If your child experiences long periods of allergic rhinitis or conjunctivitis symptoms in the spring, summer and autumn months, you should speak with your pediatrician about the possibility of trying one or a combination of therapies to relieve the symptoms.

For more information about allergies in children, visit <http://www.aap.org/sections/allergy/child.cfm>

Sun Safety

As your child dons his or her Little League uniform for a big game or your family heads to the pool, make extra sure that your kids have adequate sun protection. People of every skin type and color can experience adverse effects of excess sun exposure: sunburn, skin cancer — even potential suppression of the immune system! A few basic thoughts to remember:

- All babies under 6 months should be kept out of direct sunlight. Wearing protective clothing and coverings should be the rule and these infants should especially minimize outdoor summer sun exposure



between 10 am and 4 pm. Small amounts of sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 may be used on small, exposed skin areas.

- For children over 6 months of age, sunscreen should be applied over any area that will be sun-exposed. You should choose a “broad spectrum” sunscreen that covers UVA and UVB rays and has a SPF of 15 or higher.
- Liberally apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes prior to going outside and then every 2 hours after that. Even “waterproof” sunscreen should be reapplied after swimming or just being out in the sun.
- Remember that children can get sunburned even on cloudy days. Sunscreen still must be worn if they will be spending time at the beach, or by any reflective surfaces such as water.

For more information, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics website at

http://www.aap.org/publiced/BR_Sunsafety.htm

Conveniently located on the first floor of Suburban Hospital, the Pediatric Center’s pediatricians and nurses provide 24-hour care ranging from minor bruises, cuts and illnesses to more significant problems requiring emergent attention. Our facility recently celebrated five years of caring for the children of the greater Bethesda area in our bright, pediatric-focused facility.