February is Heart Month: Help Your Child Stay Healthy

The American Academy of Pediatrics ranks heart disease as the number one killer of men and women in the United States. Risk factors for heart disease include smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood level of cholesterol, physical inactivity, obesity, and family history of early on-set heart disease. Knowing your family's history is important to understanding your child’s health risks. Be sure to let your child’s doctor know of your family's health history and keep the doctor updated if a health concern becomes apparent in a parent, parents' siblings or a grandparent. If your child's family health history is unknown, let your child's doctor know and the doctor will watch your child's development carefully during routine checkups.

You can protect your child from future heart problems by offering heart-healthy meals and snacks and making sure they get plenty of exercise and sleep. A healthy lifestyle benefits all family members and ensures your child's healthy development. Children learn healthy habits from their families. You are a role model for your child as they develop healthy eating habits and stay active every day. When possible include your child in planning meals and snacks and ask them to help you choose healthy food when shopping. Invite your child to go on walks or ride bikes together. Encourage your child to play outside and play active games with them that include lots of physical activity.

It is not too late for you and your child to make some healthy new year's resolutions that focus on forming good health habits. If your family's new year's resolutions include eating a heart-healthy diet, staying active and getting plenty of sleep every day, your family is on the way to a healthy life.

For more information on heart healthy practices please visit https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/prevention.htm
Hang on to your hats! It's time to gear up for the National Education Association's "Read Across America Day". On Monday, March 2, 2020, tip your hat to Dr. Seuss, celebrate his birthday, and his newly discovered book, What Pet Should I Get?.

Celebrate with your child by reading some of the great books written by Dr. Seuss. Read Green Eggs and Ham. Then have fun in the kitchen by making Green Eggs and Ham for breakfast. Go to Seussville for more activities you can do with your child on this special day. Check with your child's teacher to see if they are having school-wide events to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday.

Explore the resources and find activities on the Read Across America 2019 – 2020 Calendar.


Winter in Florida may bring some cooler weather and often brings rain. If you are at home with your child on a rainy or cold day, you may need some ideas for activities you will both enjoy. Here are some activities to do at home with your child that helps them learn new skills as you have fun together.

Make a paper chain: Teaching your child time measurement skills may be as simple as using a paper chain to count down to a special event or a special day. In anticipation of birthdays, holidays, weekends or trips, making a paper chain with the number of links that correspond to the number of days until the event helps your child understand the concept of time. Cut 1-inch by 5-inch strips from construction paper or paper grocery bags. Show your child how to loop the paper strips around each other and help them tape, glue or staple the ends together. Hang the paper chain somewhere your child can see it and help them remove one link of the chain each day and count the remaining links. This lets your child know how many days they have until the special day.
Make a map: Help your child make a map of their room, your home, the way to get to their grandparents’ home or your neighborhood. You can draw a map together or create one using paper, labels, stickers or pictures cut from magazines to represent places or sites on the map. Young children may enjoy making a map of their room. If a piece of paper represents their room, help them match the sides of the paper to the walls of their room and place objects found in their room in the correct places. After taking a walk around the neighborhood, you can help your child make a map of what they saw on their walk. Making maps together with your child helps them understand the concept of spatial relationships between objects and locations as well as measurement of distances.

Tossing snowballs: Use beanbags, yarn balls or foam balls as snowballs. Cut holes in a large piece of cardboard that are big enough for the snowballs to go through. You and your child can decorate the cardboard by drawing or painting it to look like a tree, an animal or a target. Have your child toss the snowballs through the holes. At first, have them stand close to the cardboard and have them gradually move farther away as they improve at tossing the snowballs through the holes. You can show them how to toss the snowballs underhanded and overhanded and see which way is easier for them. This activity helps your child develop their large motor skills as well as distance measurement skills.

Read together daily: Snuggle up and read together every day. It is important to read and explore books with your child on a regular basis. On a cold or rainy day, have your child choose two or three books that you can read to them. Talk about the pictures in the books and discuss what happens to the characters in the story. As you read, ask them to predict what will happen on the next page or ask what they think the characters are thinking or feeling. After you read the story, have your child tell you what they remember about the story or act out the story with them. This helps your child’s development of literacy skills.

February is a good time to check your child’s developmental milestones to see how they are growing and learning. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a free app that you can download to keep track of their developmental progress. From birth to age 5, your child reaches milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act and move. The app has a list of the milestones for children birth to five. The app contains photos and videos to illustrate each milestone. During this month, check on all of the milestones for your child’s age. If you are concerned about their development in any area, talk with your health care professional or your child’s teacher.

For more information on developmental milestones visit

https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html
February 9 is National Stop Bullying Day. On this day take time to talk with your child about bullying. Most people think that bullying does not happen to young children, but recent research shows that the behaviors that later become bullying begin with some children as young as 3 years old.

Young children are learning appropriate social behaviors as they interact with other children their age in settings such as child care centers, family child care homes, recreational centers, church groups and sports groups. As a parent, you can begin teaching your child the social and emotional skills necessary to forming friendships such as sharing, listening, kindness and empathy as early as possible. Allow your child to watch television or online programs such as Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood or Sesame Street but do not allow them to watch programs that show aggressive behaviors or violence. Talk with your child about appropriate ways to express their emotions and what to do if they are upset or scared.

Be proactive in stopping bullying by talking with your child about any problems they are having with friends or other children in their class or play groups. Check in with your child’s teacher if you notice any changes in their behavior or if they complain about going to school. Make sure to talk with them about their friends and how they treat others at school or in play groups. The best way a parent can help their child avoid bullying or being a bully is to be a good role model by treating other people with kindness and empathy.

For more information on bullying please visit https://www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/bullying-early-childhood

February is Children’s Dental Health Month. You can practice healthy dental care starting at birth to prevent or reduce tooth decay and set a foundation for healthy dental habits with your child.

Children Birth to Twelve Months of Age:

- Clean your baby’s gums after feedings, using a wet washcloth to gently massage the gums.
- Once your baby’s teeth come in, you should use a soft toothbrush to brush the teeth, with no toothpaste. Continue to massage the gums with a wet washcloth where there are no teeth.
- To stop the transmission of infectious bacteria that causes tooth decay avoid sharing utensils and cleaning bottle nipples and pacifiers with your mouth.
- Around your baby’s first birthday schedule their first dental appointment.
Children Twelve to Eighteen Months of Age:
- Check the inside of your child’s mouth and teeth for small white or brown spots, which may be a sign of tooth decay. If you see these spots make a dental appointment immediately.
- If your child has not seen a dentist, schedule a dental appointment for them.

Children Eighteen Months to Five Years of Age:
- At age two, children can begin to use a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Continue to use a soft toothbrush to brush your child’s teeth. Teach your child to spit the toothpaste out and not swallow it.
- You can begin to teach your child how to brush their teeth.
- Your child should see the dentist, at least twice a year.

February 14, 2020 is Valentine’s Day, where love is celebrated most often with a lot of sweets and candy. Be sure your child brushes extra carefully after eating sweets to reduce the risk of tooth decay.

The Molar Express provides the following dental services to Medicaid-eligible Florida residents’ birth through 20.

Diagnostic: Examinations, digital x-rays, biopsies
Preventative: Prophylaxis (cleanings), fluoride treatments, sealants
Restorative: Composite and amalgam restorations, stainless steel crowns
Surgical: Extractions and emergency treatment
Education: Presentations for schools, community groups, and health fairs.

For more information about these services in your area contact your local Department of Health.

Special Dates in February

- African American History Month
- Children's Dental Health Month
- National Heart Month
- 2- Ground Hog Day
- 7- Wear Red Day
- 9- Stop Bullying Day
- 14- Valentine's Day
- 17- President's Day
- 29- Leap Day

Richard Corcoran
Commissioner of Education
Shan Goff
Executive Director

250 Marriott Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Toll-free 866-357-3239
www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com