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...between 1965 and 1996 the consumption of milk by teenagers decreased by 36% while consumption of soda increased by 200%.

Junk Food Nation

by Ceil Than

When your child asks, "What's for dinner?" if you reply, "Happy Meals and TiVo" more than once in a blue moon, you are probably contributing to the obesity epidemic sweeping America. According to a 2001 Surgeon General's report, only 3% of Americans meet at least 4 of the 5 food guide pyramid recommendations for the intake of grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy, and less than one-third of Americans meet federal recommendations for 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least 5 days per week.

Couch Potatoes

Eight years ago, "The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity" encouraged families, communities, and schools to work together to fight obesity. It suggested strategies such as mandatory physical education requirements for all grade levels, healthy food choices extending from the home to the cafeteria, and accessible recreational facilities in all communities. Americans have not yet incorporated these suggestions into their lives.



Medicalnewstoday.com cites an article in the January/February 2009 issue of *Child Development* that claims 89% of a typical preschool day is spent in sedentary pursuits. The article, based on a study funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, points out that even when preschoolers were supposed to be engaged in vigorous activity, 56% of playground activities were sedentary. The study concluded that when preschoolers had enough open space, particularly outdoors, as well as balls and other active play items, they were more likely to be active, but teachers did not "organize, model and encourage physical activity."

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reports that in 2008, children between

the ages of 8 and 18 spent an average of 6 hours daily using the computer or watching television instead of being physically active. Advertisers spent \$76.6 million on internet marketing and \$852.9 million on television, radio, and print advertisements for products aimed at children. Of all the food advertisements viewed by children, 98% were for products high in fat, sugar, or sodium.

How Much Is Too Much?

Carbonated beverages top the list of foods advertised to children, followed by restaurant foods and breakfast cereals. Beverage companies spent \$492,495 in advertising compared to \$54,475 in advertising spent by companies that sell dairy products. What do those advertising dollars buy? Statistics posted on Website of Parents Against Junk Food offer a clue. The group, which includes Christopher Kimball, founder and editor of *America's Test Kitchen*, claims that between 1965 and 1996 the consumption of milk by teenagers decreased by 36% while consumption of soda increased by 200%. According to MSN's Health Day News, a study by Dr. Y. Claire Wang, a researcher at the Harvard School of Public Health, published in the December 2007 issue of *Pediatrics*, reported that from 1988 to 1994, children between 2 and 7 years old consumed between 110 and 165 calories more than they needed each day leading to a weight gain (unrelated to growth) of nearly one pound per year.

What Can Parents Do?

Parents must take charge and make healthy living a priority. Family activities and meals should focus on healthy foods and vigorous activity. The United

States Department of Agriculture explains the food pyramid and dietary guidelines on a website devoted to the food pyramid. A handy menu planner can help you use the pyramid to select foods that fit the guidelines and the caloric intake that will help maintain a healthy weight for adults and children. Many organizations, such as the American Diabetes Association, also sponsor websites that draw on the pyramid to model healthy diets.

WebMD summarizes the mantra of physicians and health maintenance organizations: "the keys to healthy eating are variety, balance, and moderation." The site also presents some tips to help families begin a healthy eating routine:

- ♦ Chart current eating and exercise patterns to determine how to balance calorie intake with calorie expenditure.
- ♦ Help your family eat at least 5 servings of brightly colored vegetables and fruits each day. Some easy ways to do this is to serve fruit with cereal in the morning or as afternoon snacks.
- ♦ Serve children child-sized portions and don't force them to clean their plates.
- ♦ Eat meals together and let children help you prepare meals and shop for ingredients.
- ♦ Plan active weekends with ice skating, biking or hiking.
- ♦ Work with your child in active household chores such as washing the car or doing yard or house cleaning.
- ♦ Join your kids in jumping rope or playing active games.

The benefits extend beyond physical health. Working together as a family to maintain your home or have fun in local parks or playgrounds helps family members bond and develop a sense of pride, self-esteem, and community.

How Are Schools Doing?

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's pamphlet, "Improving Child Nutrition Policy," summarizes the

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findings of the USDA's third School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study. The summary points out the good news that students in the National School Lunch Program were less likely to choose low-nutrition alternatives at school, and that the bad news, that while 90% of schools offered students the opportunity to select low-fat options, most students opted for high-fat choices if they were available, and low-nutrition processed foods made up 40% of the lunch entrees available to students.

Schools are fighting the same battle being waged in homes across America: how to encourage students to make healthier choices. Parents Against Junk Food urges parents to get involved and petition national lawmakers to raise the standards for school lunches. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers suggestions to help schools direct students to healthier choices including:

- ◆ Restrict the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- ◆ Restrict the availability of less nutritious foods.
- ◆ Encourage children to choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains and non-fat or low-fat dairy products by making them more available.
- ◆ Educate children to make healthy food choices.

The suggestions are similar to the steps parents should take to help children eat right at home. The more educated children become on the benefits of a healthy diet, and the less available unhealthy choices are, the more fit and happy children and families will become.

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HOTLINE



Weighing in on Childhood Obesity

by Ceil Than

Childhood obesity is a disease of epidemic proportions. In the United States it threatens everyone between 6 and 19 years of age regardless of social or economic status. In the past twenty years, the percentage of obese children in this age group more than doubled. There is no vaccine to prevent obesity, but there is a cure, if parents and children work together to practice a healthy lifestyle.

What is Childhood Obesity?

The MayoClinic defines an obese child as a child or adolescent (6 to 19 years old) who is “well above normal weight for his or her age and height.” The standard method of determining obesity is to calculate a child’s Body Mass Index (BMI) and plot it on a standard growth chart for height, sex, and age developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

These equations calculate BMI:

- $\text{weight (kg)} / [\text{height (cm)} \times \text{height (cm)}]$
- $\text{weight (lbs.)} \times 703 / [\text{height (inches)} \times \text{height (inches)}]$

A BMI above the 95th percentile is considered obese for children of the same age and sex. A BMI above the 85th percentile and below the 95th percentile is considered overweight, and a healthy weight falls between the 5th and the 85th percentile. Below the 5th percentile is considered underweight.

According to a National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 31.9% of children and adolescents are considered overweight and 16.3% are considered obese.

What Causes Childhood Obesity?

Obesity can be attributed to genetic makeup. A study by Penn State Children’s Hospital claims that infants with obese parents have an 80 percent chance of

developing obesity. However, childhood obesity is most often caused by a caloric imbalance. A caloric imbalance occurs when a child consumes more calories than his or her body is able to burn up in activities. The body converts the excess calories to fat that it stores in areas such as the stomach, hips, and thighs.

The American Heart Association provides a guideline for the average number of calories a child should consume to maintain a healthy weight. For example, a 14-18 year old girl should consume 1,800 calories. A 14-18 year old boy should consume 2,200 calories. The calories should come from a balanced diet, not junk food, and children of all ages should engage in 60 minutes of vigorous exercise per day.

The MayoClinic states many triggers for overeating such as using food to deal with emotions such as stress or boredom, the convenience and availability of junk food (much of which is purchased by parents), and family dynamics (families who are unable to purchase and prepare healthy foods or make time for exercise).

The CDC points out that 80% of overweight children between 10 and 15 years of age become obese adults by the age of 25.

What are the Risks?

At any age, obesity increases the risk of developing serious health problems. Along with the spike in the number of obese children, pediatricians are also seeing a spike in children with high cholesterol, high blood pressure, type-2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, asthma and breathing problems, sleep apnea, and early puberty.

The MayoClinic cites serious social and emotional problems that frequently occur in overweight or obese children:

- ◆ Low self-esteem or depression. Overweight or obese children are often the victims of bullying which results in feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness.
- ◆ Behavior and learning problems. Overweight or obese children are often very self-conscious and either act out or withdraw in a classroom setting. Anxiety over attending school distracts from their ability to concentrate and learn.

What Can Be Done?

Parents play a crucial role in preventing a child from becoming overweight or obese and helping an already overweight or obese child regain a normal weight. Until a child is well into adolescence, parents model and monitor a child's behavior, exercise, and eating habits.

The MayoClinic suggests five ways parents can help their children avoid obesity:

- ◆ Make a habit of yearly well-child visits to the pediatrician. The pediatrician can monitor the child's BMI and growth and discuss healthy lifestyle tips.
- ◆ Be a role model. Children imitate their parents. Parents must make sure they practice the healthy living that they preach to their children. This includes eating right and getting exercise.
- ◆ Don't turn food into a power struggle. The MayoClinic discourages using certain foods, such as sweets, as a reward or withholding them as a punishment.
- ◆ Accentuate the positive. Instead of nagging children to exercise or eat right because they are overweight, make exercise or healthy meals a fun time that taps into a child's own natural instincts to eat when hungry or play vigorously.

- ◆ Have patience. Harping on your child's weight as a problem may have an adverse effect and cause the child to develop an unhealthy fixation with his or her weight. Instead, focus on the positives and realize that your child's weight will be helped by his or her continued growth and development.

Parents and children can work together to build a healthy nurturing lifestyle. Make healthy living a family affair and an opportunity to bond and grow together.

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HOTLINE

“Can I Keep It?” Why Parents Should Say “No”

By Ceil Than

Johnny Weissmuller had Cheeta. Ronald Reagan had Bonzo. Michael Jackson had a zoo on his Neverland ranch, and Tippi Hedren operates the Shambala preserve for abandoned or mistreated exotic animals. Hollywood makes exotic pets look harmless and cute, but this description couldn't be farther from the truth. The rich and famous are not the only ones who can obtain and own such pets. If you don't have an exotic pet, your neighbor probably does. Any one can start his or her own menagerie through pet shops and exotic pet dealers.

Easy to Obtain

A 2004 *New York Times* article pinpoints New York, Los Angeles, and Miami as the top three destinations for exotic animal imports. The majority of these creatures are not destined for Hollywood stardom, professional zoos, or research labs. They are sold as pets to adults and children who probably do not understand the risks involved in owning such pets.

Kenneth Drysko, a University of Florida herpetologist, explained this dilemma to *The New York Times*: “Any child can go to a pet store and buy a [Nile monitor lizard] hatchling for \$10...but no one realizes the ability this animal has to tear off your cat's head with one twist.” The Nile monitor lizard begins life as a carnivorous reptile the size of a man's palm. However, it grows rapidly to a length of approximately seven feet. It can climb trees and dig tunnels, and it is powerful and aggressive enough to prey on small animals.

Risky Business to Keep

A 2007 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report states that over one million reptiles are imported into the United States each year for commercial sale. Reptiles made up a fraction of the 650 million exotic animals that were legally imported into the United

States between 2004-2006, according to a 2006 article on Buzzle.com. This does not take into account what Buzzle.com cites as the \$10 billion-per-year black market traffic in illegally imported exotic animals.

Paris Hilton counts a ferret, a monkey, and a kinkajou named Baby Luv as her pets. All of these animals as well as their relatives such as chinchillas and hedgehogs are available for sale to parents swayed by celebrity chic and the apparent harmlessness of the animals. Darin Carroll, a disease researcher for the CDC, explains this process for Buzzle.com: “A wild animal may be in the bush, and in less than a week it's in a little girl's bedroom.” Purchasers do not realize that the animal is still wild and cannot be domesticated.

Physical Harm from Attacks

Although Baby Luv's bite on Paris Hilton's arm made headlines, the recent attack by Travis the chimpanzee gives shocking support to the view that wild animals can never be truly tamed. According to a 2009 *New York Daily News* report, Travis had been employed in the entertainment industry. As a young chimp he appeared on a commercial for Old Navy as well as a television pilot before being adopted by Sandy Herold and reared for fourteen years as if he were a human child. However, the 200-pound animal turned on a family friend and mauled her in a vicious attack that left her severely physically scarred and in critical condition. An NBC Connecticut report on the attack puts the number of pet monkeys and primates in the United States at 15,000.

Physical harm from attacks or bites is not the only or even the biggest risk in owning an exotic pet. Disease is the number one danger. A 2007 CDC report lists human infections from exotic pets as

ranging from severe monkey pox (a form of smallpox) from pet prairie dogs or lyssaviruses (rabies strains) in pet bats to ringworm infections from African pygmy hedgehogs or chinchillas. A kinkajou bite contains viruses that cause an infection which, if left untreated, can cause loss of a limb.

Disease Transmitters

The Buzzle.com article lists more statistics from the CDC:

- ◆ Between 2000 and 2006 770 people contracted tularemia from rabbits, hamsters, and other rodents.
- ◆ Between 1996 and 2006 more than 300 people contracted and 93 people died from hantavirus carried by rodents.
- ◆ Nearly 5% of the 210,000 people who contracted salmonella between 2000 and 2004 got it from exposure to reptilian pets such as turtles or iguanas.
- ◆ In 2005, 30 people in 10 states contracted a drug-resistant form of salmonella associated with hamsters and “pocket pets.”
- ◆ Since 1975, the CDC has prohibited the importation and sale of most monkeys as pets. However, some research macaques are sold as pets. Macaques carry the Herpes B virus that can infect humans and result in neurological damage and death.

Tips for Safer Contact

A 2008 report by ABC News states that 4 million households in the United States have pet reptiles and 11% of salmonella illnesses in children are a direct result of contact with lizards or turtles as pets. The CDC recommends that families avoid having turtles as pets especially if the household contains infants or young children, elderly, or persons with weak immune systems. It also offers tips to families who do have turtles:

- ◆ Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after handling the turtle, its environment, or its feces.

- ◆ Don't let the turtle walk around the house and contaminate surfaces especially where food is prepared.
- ◆ Do not use the kitchen sink to clean the turtle or its habitat.
- ◆ Disinfect any sink used for this purpose.
- ◆ Since 1975 it has been illegal to sell or distribute a turtle with a shell less than 4 inches in length because it can fit in a child's mouth.

Future Dangers

Exotic pets can also disrupt the ecosystem. *The New York Times* article explains that many Nile monitor lizard owners abandon the animals when the lizards grow too large and aggressive. Since the lizards have no natural predators and a female can lay 80 eggs in a single nesting, they flourish in Florida canals in particular. They prey on native wildlife and rob nests of eggs preventing the native species from repopulating. As they move into populated areas, they prey on pet dogs and cats.

“No kids have been hurt yet, and I hope it never happens,” comments Todd Campbell, Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Tampa, in speaking to the *St. Petersburg Times* about abandoned Nile monitor lizards, “but it could, easily.”

No matter how cute and harmless these pets seem, from monkeys to turtles, the novelty of owning exotic pets is not worth the risks they pose.

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Purrrfect Pets?

By Ceil Than

Calvin Coolidge filled the White House with exotic pets (a bobcat, a goose, a donkey, a cat, two lion cubs, an antelope, a wallaby, and a pygmy hippopotamus as listed in a CNN.com article). Bill Clinton brought a pet cat, and President Barack Obama has opted for a dog. Like exotic pets, traditional pets such as dogs and cats pose risks, but they are the best pets for children, even allergic children such as the President Obama's oldest daughter.

Good Vibes

The 2005-2006 National Pet Owners Survey identified 63% of all households in America (69 million households) as owning a pet. The most popular pets were freshwater fish (139 million), cats

(90 million), dogs (73 million), small animals (18 million), birds (16 million), and reptiles (11 million).

The survey, conducted by the American Pet Products Association also asked pet owners why they had a pet. Over half replied that pets were beneficial to their health, and 40% replied that a dog helps them exercise, but the most frequently given response was that pets provide companionship and affection.

What Are the Benefits?

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, owning and caring for a pet helps children build self-esteem, responsibility, respect, and self-confidence. It also helps lay the foundation for trust, compassion, and empathy that can spill over into their relationships with peers.

The Academy offers guidelines for successful pet care:

- ◆ Parents must supervise all children who care for pets.
- ◆ Never leave a child under 4 years old alone with a pet.
- ◆ Children under 10 years old are not physically mature enough to care for large cats or dogs.
- ◆ If a child consistently forgets to take care of his or her pet even after being reminded, the pet should be taken to a new home.

What Are the Risks?

Dogs and cats are no exception when it comes to being carriers of diseases that can be transmitted to their human owners. Kidshealth.org lists the common infections carried by dogs and cats. Among them are:

- ◆ *Campylobacter* infection caused by the *Campylobacter jejuni* bacteria infects the intestinal tract of the animals. Kids can become infected by touching contaminated water or feces resulting in diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever.
- ◆ Rabies caused by a virus transmitted through contact with saliva from an infected animal. Most pets are vaccinated against rabies.
- ◆ Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is common in the south central and mid-south Atlantic states. It is caused by *Rickettsia rickettsii* bacteria transmitted from animals to humans through tick bites. Symptoms include high fever, chills and a rash across the body.
- ◆ Ringworm is a skin infection caused by fungi transmitted from infected pets to kids. The infected area is dry, scaly and round and often causes bald patches in the scalp.
- ◆ Toxocariasis is caused by the parasitic roundworm (*Toxocara*) that lives in the intestines of dogs and cats. Eggs are present in the pet's feces. A child may touch the infected feces or a contaminated area and ingest the eggs. Symptoms include cough, fever, rash,

and swollen lymph nodes. If the larvae enter the bloodstream and reach the eyes it can lead to permanent blindness.

- ◆ Toxoplasmosis is caused by a parasite found in cat feces. Symptoms include swollen glands, muscle pain, fever, sore throat and a rash. However, if a pregnant woman becomes infected it can cause miscarriage, premature births, and severe illness and blindness in newborns.

Although some groups, such as pregnant women, very young children, or owners with weak immune systems, are at the most risk for these infections, all of these infections can be successfully treated. The scratch or bite from the animal may not only transfer a virus, bacteria, or parasite, but also inflict physical injury on the child or adult. Kidshealth.com offers tips to maintain a safe relationship with a pet. Among them are:

- ◆ Always wash your hands after touching your pet or its food.
- ◆ Wear gloves when cleaning the pet's waste or living space.
- ◆ Don't share food with your pet or kiss it because saliva transmits diseases.
- ◆ Don't let your pet near the kitchen area where you prepare your food.
- ◆ Wash your pet outside. If you must use the bathtub, disinfect it afterward.

I'm Allergic

The Obamas' search for a hypoallergenic breed of dog received a lot of coverage in the press. In fact, according to the Humane Society of the United States, all dogs and cats, even hairless breeds, are allergenic. The Society states that 15% of the population in the United States is allergic to dogs or cats. People who are allergic to dogs and cats are sensitive to the allergens or allergy-triggering proteins secreted from glands in the animal's skin (or the animal's saliva or urine) and released into the air when the animal's fur is disturbed.

Dogs with soft hair that grows but does not shed, such as a Poodle or a Bichon Frise, are often recommended to allergic owners because they seem to trigger allergic reactions less frequently. However, there is no cure for pet allergies, and pet owners with allergies do not build up a tolerance to the pet simply by living with it.

The Humane Society offers some suggestions that can help pet owners minimize the exposure to pet allergens. Among them are:

- ◆ Ban your pets from your bedroom. Use a HEPA filter as well as allergen-resistant coverings for your mattress and pillows to keep the room allergen-free so that you can sleep well.
- ◆ Use a HEPA filter and powerful vacuums to keep the rest of the house as free of pet hair and dander as possible.
- ◆ Bathe your pet (even your cat) weekly. This can reduce the level of allergens on the fur by nearly 84%.
- ◆ Periodic allergy shots can blunt a person's reaction to pet allergens.

The most telling statistic in the Humane Society report was a survey of 341 adults allergic to dogs or cats who owned a pet in spite of their allergy. When asked by their physician to give up their pets, only one in five complied.

Man's Best Friend

More than any other animals, dogs and cats are companion animals. They like to be hugged and petted, played with and groomed. Their responsiveness forms a strong bond between pet and pet owner that helps pet owners psychologically as well as physically. Reading to a dog is sometimes used by local libraries in an effort to help young children master reading skills. Dogs are trained as guide animals, and both dogs and cats are routinely brought to elder care centers to help residents combat loneliness and withdrawal. As with all animals, there are risks to owning a dog or cat, but

many times the advantages outweigh the risks if the owner practices pet safety.

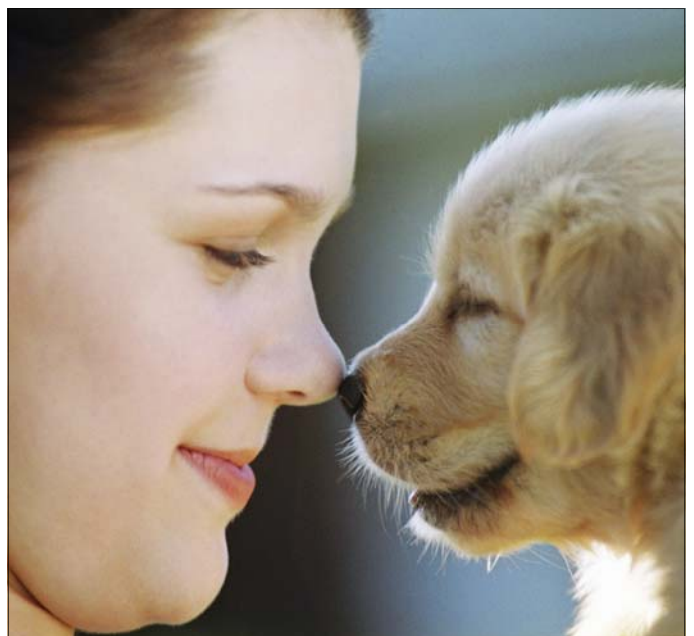
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HOTLINE



A Summer Day Can Turn Deadly

by Ceil Than

What could be nicer than a summer afternoon barbecue and a swim in the pool, or a picnic and a dip in a lake? Nothing, unless you are one of the many people who are accidentally poisoned while enjoying summer activities. Accidental poisoning can happen at any time of year to people of any age; however, summer can be a particularly active and dangerous season. Sources of potential toxins range from food to insects to plants to swimming pools. Here are some tips from the Long Island Regional Poison and Drug Information Center to help keep your summer outings safe.

Cookout Safety

- ◆ Check to make sure your gas grill is functioning properly.
- ◆ If you use a charcoal grill, keep lighter fluid and matches out of the reach of children, and use them properly.
- ◆ Keep raw meats away from cooked foods or crudite to avoid spreading salmonella.
- ◆ Wash your hands after handling raw foods.
- ◆ Cook meats to an internal temperature of 160°F.

Swimming Safety

Remember the 3 “PLEAs” to stop germ-borne illnesses:

- ◆ Please don’t swim when you have diarrhea.
- ◆ Please don’t swallow water or even get it in your mouth.
- ◆ Please practice good hygiene. Shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the bathroom.

Tick Safety

The deer tick is the number one transmitter of Lyme Disease. The tick needs to be attached to its host (you or me) for 36 to 48 hours in order for the

bacterium that causes the disease to infect the host.

These are some of the ways that the Long Island Regional Poison and Drug Information Center suggests to avoid being bitten by a tick:

- ◆ Avoid tall grass or grassy wooded areas.
- ◆ Stick to a cleared trail if you are hiking.
- ◆ Wear light colored clothing. A dark tick stands out on a white or light background.
- ◆ Wear long sleeved shirts and long pants and closed shoes. Tuck your shirt in at the waist and your pants in your socks. Secure pant legs with elastic bands.
- ◆ Use insect repellents containing DEET or 7% picaridin.
- ◆ Check yourself for ticks when you get home.

If you find a tick, use a blunt tweezer to grab it by the head as close to the skin as possible, remove it by pulling upward without applying pressure. Put the tick into a plastic bag. You can discard it or save it to take to your physician or send to a laboratory for analysis.

Sun Safety

Remember to Slip, Slop, Slap.

- ◆ Slip! On a Shirt – screen your skin from the sun with clothing.
- ◆ Slop! On Sunscreen – Use sunscreen with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- ◆ Slap! On a Hat – Wear a wide-brim hat to shade face, neck, ears.
- ◆ Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Plant Safety

The sap of poison ivy, oak, and sumac contains

urushiol, an easily spread irritant that causes painful skin blisters.

- ◆ Avoid plants with leaves that come in groups of three.
- ◆ If you touch one of these plants, wash the skin with cool water as soon as possible to prevent spreading. The oil is stubborn and pharmacies also sell special washes to help remove the oil from your skin.

Do not eat plants or berries you find in your yard or on a hike. Mushrooms may be especially tempting, but it's difficult to distinguish between toxic and non-toxic fungi.

The Wisconsin Poison Center adds a few more tips:

Pool Safety

- ◆ Pool chemicals can be dangerous. Inhaling the dust or vapors can cause shortness of breath. The dust or vapors can also irritate the eyes or cause skin rashes.
- ◆ Store all chemicals out of the reach of children.
- ◆ Wash you hands after touching these chemicals.

Insect Safety

- ◆ Cover as much of your body as possible with clothing.
- ◆ Use an insect repellent with the lowest possible concentration of DEET. The more DEET a product contains, the longer it stays effective after application. However, it is toxic. Healthy Child states that DEET and Permethrin, commonly used in insect repellent that is sprayed or spread on the skin, can be partially absorbed into the bloodstream and has been linked to seizures in children and others who are sensitive to chemical substances. The site suggests natural oils such as Neem oil as effective alternatives. Neem oil, derived from the Neem tree (a type of evergreen indigenous to the Indian subcontinent), repels more than 200 species of insects.

Food Safety

In addition to cooking meat well and avoiding cross contamination between raw and cooked foods, the Wisconsin Poison center suggests using insulated containers and coolers to keep foods cool. Foods left out in the hot sun for too long can spoil, and the people who eat them can become ill. Symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps and fever can develop in a few hours to a few days after a person has ingested spoiled food.

Keep all of these tips in mind and your day in the sun will be as relaxing, peaceful, and enjoyable as you imagined it would be.

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Healthy Child
1275 Fourth Street #118
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
(707) 570-0408

Long Island Regional Poison and Drug Information Center
Winthrop University Hospital
259 First St.
Mineola, Ny 11501
1-800-222-1222 – poison hotline
www.lirpdic.org

Wisconsin Poison Center
UW Hospital Poison Prevention & Education Center
600 Highland Ave. Rm F6/133
Madison, WI 53792-9475
www.uwhealth.org/poison
1-800-222-1222

HOTLINE

A Water Wing and a Prayer Aren't Enough

by Ceil Than

For many people, a summer day wouldn't be complete without a cool dip in a swimming pool, their own or their neighbor's or the community's or housing complex's. However, relaxing by the pool does not mean relaxing pool safety.

Three Hazards

According to statistics for the United States compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC), in 2005 there were 3,582 deaths due to unintentional drowning, an average of 10 deaths per day. More than 1 in 4 of these fatalities were children under 14 years old. For every child fatality 4 other children received emergency treatment for serious but nonfatal submersion injuries that in many cases resulted in brain damage.

The Injury Prevention Program (TIPP), sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics, reminds parents that "teaching your child to swim does not mean your child is safe in the water." Many times the cause of a drowning death is not inability to swim. Pool hazards include entrapment in the pool's drain, swimming while abusing drugs or alcohol, or diving board accidents.

Entrapment

Entrapment occurs when a swimmer comes into contact with a drain or suction fitting that is loose or broken. A swimmer's hair, limbs, body, bathing suit, or jewelry comes into contact with a suction fitting and either becomes entangled or "glued" to the fitting by the power of the suction. Many times children engage in dangerous play with the suction by putting in their fingers, toes, or limbs, or sitting on a drain. If the drain has a broken cover, the suction used to draw water through the drain to circulate water in the pool is so strong that it can trap a person's arm or leg or torso in it or against it and hold the person underwater until he or she drowns. Sitting on the drain can also result in disembowelment.

Similar dangers lurk in hot tubs or spas that have loose or broken drain or suction covers. In 2002, seven-year-old Graeme Baker, granddaughter of former Secretary of State James A. Baker III drowned in a spa when the suction of a faulty drain held her under the water. The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act of 2007, named in Graeme's honor, prohibits the manufacture, sale, or distribution of drain covers that do not meet anti-entrapment safety standards established by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). It also creates an incentive grant program for states to adopt comprehensive pool and spa safety laws requiring certain safety devices in pools and spas to protect children. It establishes a national drowning prevention education program within the CPSC, and it requires public pools to incorporate anti-entrapment drain covers and other layers of protection such as Safety Vacuum Release Systems that will automatically shut off a blocked pump and break the suction holding a person to that pump.

Alcohol and Drugs

The CDC reports that alcohol is involved in up to half of adolescent and adult deaths associated with water recreation. Most drownings involving young adults (over 15 years old) happen in lakes, ponds, and rivers, just the type of place a young person might go on an unsupervised adventure or a secret alcohol-related party. Alcohol impairs judgment, balance, and coordination. Exposure to heat and sun heightens alcohol's effects.

Diving Boards

Although *Pool and Spa News Online* reports that sales of new diving boards fell by 25 percent from 1999-2004, diving boards still present a pool safety hazard. In 1993 14-year-old Shawn Meneely hurled himself off a diving board head first without raising his arms over his head for protection. The move was called a "suicide dive," and it resulted in paralysis

from the neck down.

“When diving off the board,” explained Art Mittelstaedt, Chairman of the National Aquatic Council, in *Pool and Spa News Online*, “the body goes about 17 feet a second give or take. That is a very quick period of time for a diver to realize the pool might not be adequate for his dive and to recover.” If the diver is not able to pull up in time, he or she could hit the bottom and be seriously injured.

The CPSC notes that improper use of a pool slide, such as sliding down head first, presents the same dangers as improper use of a diving board.

Pool Safety Tips

TIPP, the CDC, and the CPSC offer pool safety tips. Among them are these:

- ◆ Make sure an undistracted adult, preferably one who knows CPR, supervises children in a pool at all times. This not the time to multitask.
- ◆ Use “touch supervision” with children under 5 years old. This means that an adult is within an arm’s reach of the child at all times.
- ◆ Use a 4-foot high fence that encircles the pool to separate the pool from the house. Most young children who drowned in pools were last seen in the house while both parents were home and had been out of sight for less than five minutes.
- ◆ Keep rescue equipment such as a long hook and life preservers and a telephone by the pool.
- ◆ If a swimmer is trapped against a drain, turn off the pump. Force your hand between the drain and the swimmer’s body to break the suction.

Drowning Dangers

The CPSC states that drowning is the leading cause of death for children younger than 5 years old, but not all of these drownings occur in swimming pools. One third as many children under 5 years old drown

from household dangers as from swimming pools.

Two-thirds of these deaths occur because young children are left unattended in the bath tub. Bath seats or rings are not foolproof protection.

Many other deaths occur because toddlers fall head first into a toilet or a tall (5 gallon) chore bucket filled with water, and they cannot extricate themselves. Still other deaths occur because a small child climbs into a spa or hot tub and was unnoticed because the cover stayed in place.

Hot tubs and spas pose an added danger of death due to the hot temperature of the water. Water over 110 degrees Fahrenheit can scald a child. In 1987 the CPSC pushed for temperature controls to regulate spa water temperatures so that they did not exceed 104 degrees Fahrenheit. However, even water heated to typical hot tub temperatures can raise the child’s body temperature and result in heat stroke. Also, children can become drowsy in warm water. They can fall asleep, slip under the water, and drown.

Don’t Drink the Water

Two additional dangers to be aware of are contamination and lightning. Disease can spread in even the most carefully maintained pools most often through contamination by human feces. According to a report on MedicineNet.com, in 1998 1 child died and 25 people were infected by an *e. coli* strain from feces in the pool water at a park near Atlanta. Mothers that warn their children to avoid swallowing water while swimming give the right advice. Chlorine in a pool acts as a disinfectant, but it works gradually and cannot kill all the bacteria present.

MedicineNet.com lists several common sense ways to



prevent pool contamination:

- ◆ Don't go swimming if you or your child has a sign of diarrhea.
- ◆ Shower thoroughly before swimming. Wash your child's bottom in particular.
- ◆ Take bathroom breaks before and during your swimming time and wash hands thoroughly afterward.
- ◆ Change diapers in the restroom and not by the pool.
- ◆ Realize that swim diapers do not prevent contamination.
- ◆ Tell the lifeguard if you see feces in the pool.

Shocking News

The National Lightning Safety Institute advises swimmers to get out of indoor or outdoor pools during rain or thunder storms because of possible lightning strikes. Lightning does not have to strike the surface of the water to electrocute a swimmer. Lightning can strike the ground around the pool area and hit the pipes that carry water, gas, or electricity to and from the pool. These pipes conduct the charge to the pool, its water, and the swimmers.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggests this HANDY rule to decrease the risk of electrocution near pools:

- ◆ Hand—The five fingers represent the five seconds per mile, flash-to-bang rule. For every five seconds separating the flash from the bang, the lightning is one mile away. At a flash to bang count of thirty, when lightning is merely six miles away, swimmers should exit the water and pool area.
- ◆ Awareness—Know the weather forecast, stay informed, and exit the pool if necessary.
- ◆ Notify—Tell people that the pool is closed. Do not stand in wet areas such as showers, or locker rooms, or even under trees. Direct people to safe structures such as a visitor's center or pool office.

- ◆ Your own safety—Stay in a safe place until the thunder can no longer be heard.

Pools are safe and fun places to play only if parents and children are aware of and obey safety rules.

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www.cdc.gov

Consumer Product Safety Commission
4330 East West Highway
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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
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Washington, DC 20230
www.noaa.gov

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6222 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 600
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etaylor@hanleywood.com
www.poolspanews.com

HOTLINE

Suggested Reading

Reviews by Ceil Than

Primer for Kids' Weight Loss

In nine chapters and three appendices, Dr. Susan Bartell presents the common problems facing parents and children as they work on weight loss as well as the solutions Bartell has found to be most effective. Bartell begins by debunking common myths about children's weight from "kids don't need to watch what they eat" to "it is best to monitor everything your child eats." Bartell's response to each myth centers on parents teaching their children how to make sound nutritional choices that nourish, satisfy, and use all types of food in moderation.

Jumping the Hurdles

Throughout the book, Bartell offers questionnaires and punch lists to highlight information. For example, in Chapter One she offers parents a questionnaire to help gauge their child's height/weight ratio. Chapter Three presents the eight "Negative Force Factors" that parents and children must recognize as roadblocks to achieving healthy eating habits as well as ways to combat each one. The roadblocks center on the perception of food as well as the perception of the overweight child. The first four roadblocks are put up by advertisers who make non-nutritious foods look appealing as in television ads for junk food or vending machines in the school cafeteria. The last five roadblocks are put up by advertisers and the consumers they target who develop unrealistic and rigid body images such as idolizing air-brushed magazine models or taunting overweight classmates.

Break the Habits

In each case, Bartell's advice centers on parents educating their children about the motives of advertisers as well as how internalizing idealized body images can damage their relationships with themselves and others. She gives practical tips such as offering a single, healthy snack with no refills

when children are watching television and parents watching television with their child and discussing the commercials and programs he or she watches.

Chapters Four and Five explore the connections between the way parents teach their children to eat and the emotions surrounding food. In Chapter Four, Bartell identifies seven patterns that teach children unhealthy eating habits ranging from "clean your plate" to excessive snacking to equating food with love. She follows each with a list of ways to break the pattern and establish a healthier one. Chapter Five focuses on how parents can identify the emotional triggers for their own and their child's eating and how to break out of these habits. She includes a section on a "fear of fat," as well as guilt and frustration that can also negatively impact a child's relationship with food.

Healthy Habits

Chapter Six discusses healthy eating habits from selecting food from all sections of the food pyramid to realistic portion sizes to making sure a child does not feel deprived. Chapter Seven shows parents how to extend healthy habits when dining away from home. Chapter Eight deals with eating disorders and Chapter Nine helps parents find the time for family-centered exercise to help their child develop a healthy lifestyle. The first two appendices present the group of advisors who helped Bartell as she developed the book, and the third lists organizations, websites, and books as additional resources for parents.

Bartell's book serves as a good place to begin working with a child to develop a lifetime of healthy attitudes and habits involving food.

Dr. Susan's Kids-Only Weight Loss Guide The Parent's Action Plan for Success by Dr. Susan Bartell is published by Parent Positive Press, P.O. Box 118, Williston Park, NY 11596 <http://www.girlsonlyweightloss.com/>

Healthy Food Choices Equal Healthy Kids

This 2006 addition to the Sears Parenting Library was written by William Sears, the most well-known pediatrician since Dr. Benjamin Spock, his wife, Martha, a registered nurse, and his two sons, Robert and James, who are also pediatricians. The book focuses on the ten changes every family must make in order to live healthily:

- ◆ Shape young tastes *early*.
- ◆ Feed your family the *right carbs*.
- ◆ Feed your family the *right fats*.
- ◆ Feed your children *grow foods*.
- ◆ Feed your family *fill-up foods*.
- ◆ Begin the day with a *brainy breakfast*.
- ◆ Raise a *grazer*.
- ◆ Feed your child's *immune system*.
- ◆ Raise a *lean* family. Get active as a family.
- ◆ Teach your children to be wise supermarket shoppers.

Metabolic Programming

Beginning with the second chapter, the book is arranged according to these ten changes. Each chapter is sprinkled with grey text boxes containing “nutshell” comments that put the main point of a section into a single sentence. Sears begins with the breast-fed newborn as establishing good habits of eating just enough nutritious food to satisfy hunger and growth. As the child grows, he urges parents to feed him or her fresh, unprocessed foods in portions no bigger than the child’s fist to help reinforce the “metabolic programming” begun during breastfeeding that will keep him or her making healthy food choices throughout his or her life.

Carbs and Fats

Sears devotes the chapter on eating the *right carbs* to how to distinguish between healthy carbs (fresh

fruits, veggies, whole grains) and junky carbs (candy, sugared cereals, pastries, high-fructose corn syrup). One of the important tips he gives is to partner carbs with protein and fiber to blunt the effect of sugar on the child’s metabolism. In his chapter discussing the *right fats*, Sears emphasizes the importance of fat for proper growth, but stresses that the fat consumed must be the right kinds in the right amounts. He develops a color-coding system to rate the fats that regularly appear in foods or meal preparation. Green-light foods such as olive oil, seafood, lean meat, nut butters, and avocados are “anytime” foods that can be eaten often. Yellow-light foods such as dark chocolate, ice cream, corn, canola or palm kernel oil are “sometime” foods which are acceptable, but must not be eaten too often. Red-light foods such as bacon, fatty meats, partially hydrogenated oils, and trans fats are “no time” foods that are unacceptable and should not be eaten.



Grow Foods

In chapter five, Sears demonstrates the color-coding system as a way to select foods to eat. The best foods, the green-light foods, are termed “grow foods.” They have four characteristics:

- ◆ Grow foods are nutrient dense. This means that there are more nutrients per bite than calories, as in raw vegetables such as carrots or broccoli.
- ◆ Grow foods are fill-up foods. This means that they are satisfying without giving empty calories or too much fat.
- ◆ Grow foods balance blood sugar levels. This means they do not produce sugar highs.
- ◆ Grow foods do not contain unhealthy ingredients or artificial additives.

Sears identifies twelve “super” foods that include oatmeal, beans, eggs, and yogurt.

Graze, Don't Gorge

Chapters six, seven, and eight emphasize the importance of how to eat as much as what to eat. Sears recommends grazing, eating many small meals of super foods per day, instead of gorging on a few large meals. This encourages a steady metabolism and insulin balance. Sears also demonstrates how healthy eating leads to better stamina and brain function. He explains the relationship between foods and emotional states and inflammation that can make a child more prone to illness.

Lean and Savvy

Sears ends the volume with tips on how to raise a lean family that knows how to shop for healthy foods to eat. Sears gives ten tips on how to raise a lean child. The tips include advice about how to serve super foods as well as advice on shrinking portion sizes, encouraging the child to eat slowly and avoid mindless snacking, and setting the example for the child by staying lean yourself. Sears encourages food shopping with your children in order to educate them about making healthy food choices. He advises parents to show their children how to read the labels

on food to avoid harmful fats and additives and steer their children to the perimeter of the store where the fresh produce, fish, and meats are displayed. The final two sections answer common nutrition questions and provide two-dozen recipes using the super foods for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Sears provides a comprehensive plan that tells parents which steps to take and why each step is necessary to build a lifetime of good health for their children and themselves.

The Healthiest Kid in the Neighborhood by William Sears, M.D., Martha Sears, R.N., James Sears, M.D. and Robert Sears, M. D. is published by Little Brown and Company, 1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

www.hachettebookgroupUSA.com

Parents Are Key to Keeping Kids Off Drugs

Speaking from Experience

Although Ken Barun's book was published over twenty years ago when “Just Say No” was said with conviction instead of sarcasm, statistics on teen drug use have continued to increase, and Barun's advice remains more common sense than out of date.

In the opening chapter of *When Saying No Isn't Enough: How to Keep the Children You Love Off Drugs*, Ken Barun identifies himself as a rehabilitated drug addict who progressed from marijuana to pills to cocaine and finally heroine and “didn't expect to see [his] twenty-fifth birthday.” A graduate of the Cenikor rehabilitation program, and former CEO of that institution, Barun was tapped by the Reagan administration from 1985-87, and for the past eighteen years he has served as leader of Ronald McDonald House Charities rising to the level of Corporate Senior Vice-President.

Do What I Do

A father of four, Barun was inspired to write the book because he worried that the same peer pressure that pushed him to experiment with drugs would

begin to push his children. Barun admonishes parents to be parents to their children, be tough with them, and be good role models. For example, he warns parents that children observe and imitate their parents' attitudes toward alcohol and pills. If a child observes his or her parents taking either substance to "feel better," or "master stress," he or she also concludes that there is no harm in doing the same.

Barun urges parents to clean out the medicine cabinet because a stockpile of over-the-counter and prescription medications communicates dependence on these substances. He also urges parents to avoid flavored children's medications. In this case, he states, "bitter is better": "you *want* your child to grimace each time you uncap the bottle. You *want* him to associate drugs with something distasteful and unpleasant." He also urges parents to not only stop smoking and drink only in moderation, but also to talk to children about the dangers of smoking, alcohol, and pills, especially when newspaper and television coverage broadcast an athlete's or an actor's addiction problems.

Pressures Kids Face

Barun links the subliminal message that substance abuse of famous people sends to kids, "drugs help you excel," with one of the most often-cited reasons kids turn to drugs: to fit in and overcome peer pressure. Barun lists five pressures all kids must face as they grow up. Among these are: not being taken seriously by adults, concern over sexual development, feeling caught between adolescence and adulthood, and wanting to conform to peers while retaining their individuality.

Anxiety over these concerns may result in serious depression which can also trigger substance abuse.

Chapter Three discusses such triggers for substance abuse. In addition to depression, he lists peer pressure, boredom, the need to escape problems, rebellion, and wanting to feel like an adult. Each trigger is paired with a common sense approach a parent can take to combat each trigger. For example, parents can counter boredom by offering constructive alternatives such as a sport, or club, or part-time job.

What Parents Can Do

Chapter Four offers suggestions about how parents can take a firm stand against drugs. Barun advocates:

- ◆ Parents educating themselves about drugs
- ◆ Parents forbidding gateway drugs such as tobacco, alcohol and marijuana
- ◆ Parents emphasizing the dangers of substance abuse using a mixture of factual information about a drug and examples of what happens to users
- ◆ Parents teaching children how to "just say no"

Since the statistics Barun draws on indicate that most drugs come from schoolmates or older siblings, Barun lists several ways parents should teach children to refuse drugs when offered:

- ◆ Figure out if the indirect invitation to "hang out" is safe by asking for specifics of where you will be hanging out and what you will be doing.
- ◆ Refuse if you think the activity is not safe.
- ◆ Offer a safe activity instead, such as "I'm going to the movies, want to come?"
- ◆ Use reverse peer pressure, such as "Drugs are boring. I can't believe you need to do that stuff."
- ◆ Base your excuse on an activity, such as "I have hockey practice this afternoon."
- ◆ Ignore the person
- ◆ Walk away
- ◆ Hang out with non-users

Barun also emphasizes that a child should always know that he or she can call home for a ride as a way out. With even some of the youngest children carrying cell phones nowadays, calling parents is much simpler than it was twenty years ago.

How to Spot a Problem

Chapter Five discusses how to identify substance

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abuse problems in a child. Barun details the types of drug paraphernalia that parents must be aware of as clues to a child's substance abuse as well as behavioral changes from prolonged and frequent sessions in the bathroom to mood and behavior changes that signal possible drug use. He also provides an encyclopedia of the most commonly abused drugs and their short and long term effects.

Chapter Six gives tips on how to confront a child that you suspect is abusing drugs. Barun advises against angry confrontations that threaten punishment or play on guilt. Instead, he advises making the abuse a family problem and pledging support to help the child cope with treatment. He urges parents to be persistent and show physical proof if it can help to convince the child that the parent knows what is going on and is willing to help. For first-time offenders, he suggests drawing up a Family Contract to clearly state the rules against substance abuse and penalties if those rules are not followed. For repeat offenders, Barun urges parents to get professional help immediately.

How to Stay on Track

Chapter Seven covers the types of professional treatment available from Alcoholics Anonymous to drug rehab facilities. He gives a checklist to help evaluate programs from cost to staff credentials to detox methods.

Chapter Eight ends the discussion with tips on how to help a child maintain a drug free lifestyle. Braun reemphasizes the advice given in Chapter Three about parents offering healthy alternatives to drugs in activities to build mind, body, and self-esteem as well as the skills to refuse drugs or alcohol when peers offer them.

It's worth getting hold of a library or used book copy of Barun's book to reassure yourself that a parent-based, common sense approach can and does work.

When Saying No Isn't Enough: How to Keep the Children You Love Off Drugs by Ken Barun and Philip Bashe was published by Penguin Books, 375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014. <http://us.penguin.com>

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