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Safety Savvy! A Guide for Safe Family Fun



We all know the importance of being safety conscious with our little ones. From making sure they do not touch the hot stove to attending car seat training classes, we do all we can to keep them out of harm's way. But we should also be aware of other matters where safety may not be the first word in mind, situations that require awareness and action if they happen to occur.

In this issue of *Parent Link* we provide you a wide range of information, from seasonal safety tips to special articles and information that may be beneficial to you, your family, or someone you may know.

Having a Safe and Fun Halloween

By: Christina Villa, Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

Fall is a great time for families: Autumn art projects, weather changes, and best of all, Halloween. For kids, there's no better way to spend the day than putting on awesome costumes and picking up candy around the neighborhood. However, for parents, this holiday comes with the anxieties of strangers and danger, the spookier side of the festivities. Follow these tips to make sure you and your kids get more treats than tricks this Halloween!

Candy

Inspect all the candy your child receives while trick-or-treating before they eat it. Any candy that is unwrapped or seems to have been tampered with should be thrown away immediately. Also be sure to get rid of any candy that may cause a choking hazard or allergic reaction in your children (peanuts, chocolate, etc.).

Costumes

Getting dressed up may be the most fun part of the day. Be sure to inspect the costumes to make sure they are not too long to avoid any tripping. Make sure masks do not obstruct breathing. Also beware of costumes with guns, swords or other weapons. Some schools may not allow these accessories.

Project



Location

When going out at night to collect candy, make sure you visit places that are lit and populated. The more people are around, the less likely that something bad will happen. Visit neighborhoods that you know well and feel comfortable in. Always walk on sidewalks and in areas where drivers can see you.

There is no reason Halloween can't be fun and safe at the same time. Take this as an opportunity to have some fun as a family. Your little ninjas and princesses will cherish these memories forever.

The CDC offers a great resource for trick-or-treaters. Visit their Website (<http://www/cdc.gov/family/halloween/>) for more tips on how to have a frightfully fun Halloween.



Bullies and School Safety

School bullying has been going on for years (even during our school-age era), and it can start as early as preschool. But now more than ever, there has been an increase in trying to stop such actions in schools. According to the Website "Healthy Children," bullying is when one child picks on another child again and again, who may be weaker, smaller, shy or different. Bullying usually happens when other children are watching.

3 Types of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms. Being aware of them can help you help your child.

Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, punching

Verbal: threatening, taunting, teasing, hate speech

Social: excluding victims from activities, starting rumors about them

How to Stop Bullying

Saying "stop:" Teaching children to say "stop" in friendly situations prepares them to say it when play gets out of hand or when they are confronted by a bully.

Contact the childcare center or Kindergarten staff: Find out the facts to make sure that bullying as indeed occurred. Ask the educators for advice on the situation. Make sure to follow up a few days later.

Talk to your child about bullying: Even if you don't think your child is bullied, a bully, or a bystander, you will be helping to protect your child by asking simple questions, such as:

"How are things at school?"

"What do you think of the other kids in your class?"

"Does anyone get picked on or bullied?"



What if your child is the bully?

Multiple temper tantrums in a day, a desire to be the boss at all times and cruelty to other children or animals are some warning signs your child may be overly aggressive and a potential bully.

Set firm and consistent limits on your child's aggressive behavior. Be sure your child knows bullying is NEVER OK.

Modeling good behavior is a good way to help stop bullies or prevent them. Don't use physical force and threats to get your child to behave a certain way. Instead, be firm without being forceful. Remember, your child will do as you do.

Help your child understand how bullying hurts others. Give real examples.

References:

Healthy Children-

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/pages/Bullying-Its-Not-Ok.aspx>

Preschool Bullying: What you can do about it-

<http://www.sacsc.ca/preschool%20bullying%20web%20version.pdf>

Domestic Violence Awareness and Resources

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Although we may not be victims, we may know someone close and dear to us that may be. According to the Miami-Dade County Domestic Violence Oversight Board, as defined by law:

Domestic violence means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.

Facts

- Historically, females have been most often victimized by someone they knew.
- Females who are 20-24 years of age are at the greatest risk of nonfatal intimate partner violence.
- Children who witness violence between one's parents or caretakers is the strongest risk factor of transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.
- 30 percent to 60 percent of perpetrators of intimate partner violence also abuse children in the household.

Signs of Domestic Violence

- You see the partner violently lose temper, striking or breaking objects.
- The partner acts extremely jealous of others who pay attention to their partner.
- The victim becomes quiet when the abuser is around and seems afraid of making his or her partner angry.

- Unexplained injuries could be a giveaway, although you may not see bruises since batterers target blows to area that can be covered by clothing.
- The victim casually mentions their partner's violent behavior but dismissed what happened as "not a big deal."

Local Resource Numbers

If you or someone you know is being abused, please speak to someone. Here are a few good contacts to have handy.

Advocate Program/Domestic Violence Unit
305-704-0200, www.advocateprogram.com
Domestic Abuse Shelter Sexual Assault Response Assistance
305-743-4440, www.das.org
Child Assault Prevention Project of South Florida,
786-343-9774, www.thecaproject.org

References:

Miami-Dade County Domestic Violence Oversight Board-
http://www.miamidade.gov/domesticviolence/signs_dom_violence.asp
The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: Domestic Violence Facts-
[http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\).pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National).pdf)

Early Literacy Series: Milestones for Language and Literacy

By: Bethany Sands, Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

Research indicates that early language and literacy experiences provide significant impacts on brain development in infants and toddlers.

Literacy research states:

1. Language, reading and writing skills develop simultaneously and are inextricably linked. They do not develop independent of each other.
2. Development is a continuous process starting shortly after birth.
3. Development occurs in natural settings, through real life experiences and with other people; and through the use of literacy materials such as books, markers, and paper.

The following milestones will assist families in providing appropriate activities to support development and serve as a guide to show at what age should they expect to see both interest and beginning mastery in their children.

Infants: 6 months

- Read books with photos of people's faces, animals, familiar objects and baby toys.
- Talk to your baby constantly: say his/her name, describe what you are doing ("Mommy is going to change your diaper. Lift up your little legs.").
- Say the names of all common objects ("Here is your bottle" not "Here is your ba-ba").
- Your baby will begin to imitate speech sounds like na-na and ga-ga.

Infant/Toddler: 1 year old

- Read books and allow your child to participate, like helping you turn the pages or asking them to point objects out.
- Have conversations while doing things like riding in the car or stroller.
- Your child will understand simple phrases you say often like "time to eat" or "take a bath."
- You may have 1 or more words.
- Most babies say da-da before ma-ma!

Toddler: 2 years old

- Read and recite nursery rhymes: focus on rhyming words and ends of sentences
- Go to the library.
- Your child should be able to say about 250 words but will understand most of what you say to them.
- Your child can hold a book, turn pages and "read" by themselves for short periods of time.



Young Learner: 3 years old

- Point to pictures and words as you read.
- Play word rhyming games.
- Should be speaking at least 1,000 words.
- Repeats nursery rhymes, finger plays and commercials from TV.

Preschool Learners: 4 and 5 years old

- Focus on new words and repeat them in other settings.
- Call attention to letters, words, familiar slogans and billboards with words.
- The child should use 3,000- 5,000 words.
- Uses long sentences to convey wants, retell events and converse conversationally.

No matter how old your children are, you should read with them daily.

Use these milestones as a guide and remember that every child learns at a different rate. The early walker may develop language a little later or an early talker may master gross motor skills a little later.

This is the last of our early literacy series. We hope you enjoyed them! A special thank you to Bethany Sands!

Have FUN reading with your child!

Ask Dr. Hughes Special- Understanding Children's Fears

Young children will typically have many fears throughout their childhood. Halloween is a time when some fears may appear or intensify, with the presence of scary costumes and frightening television shows or movies. Depending on the age of your child, they may show different types of fears. Infants and toddlers often show more basic fears, mainly of separation from family, noises, falling, and animals. In preschool, children can show both simple fears of the dark, animals, monsters, ghosts, as well as loss of a family member or parental separation. School-age children may continue to show some simple fears, but also may develop a fear of physical harm, new situations (especially starting school), social rejection, or burglars.

New fears often coincide with either a transition (changing schools, new baby, moving homes) or a "trigger" event that created a fearful association for the child (such as getting stung by a bee on the playground and then becoming frightened to go outside for recess after that incident). Around Halloween, there are scary displays in stores, scary stories read and shown on TV, haunted houses visited...and exposure to this may create new fears in your child.

What can you do if your child is experiencing fear or nightmares?

-Don't expect logic or reasoning to make the child feel better. It may make sense to you to tell the child there is no such thing as monsters, but it won't decrease a young child's fear, mainly because preschoolers don't have a clear understanding of the difference between what is real and pretend (the division between reality and fantasy).

-Validate the child's fear. Don't make them feel bad or silly for being scared-- understand that it is a very real, very strong feeling. Asking the child why they are feeling scared and talking about it with them will often help them cope with the fear effectively.

-Help the child learn ways to cope with the fear. If a child is afraid of getting lost or separated from a family member, create a plan together for where you will meet or which authority figure the child should contact if you become separated.

References:

Understanding Children: Fears

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/PM1529D.pdf>

Fears, Phobias, & Anxiety

http://www.childanxiety.net/Fears_Phobias_Anxiety.htm

General Fears in Children

<http://www.parentinged.org/handout3/specific%20concerns%20problems/general%20fears.htm>

"Mommy, I'm Scared"

<http://www.lifespan.org/services/childhealth/parenting/fears.htm>

Do you have questions for our resident expert in child development? Ask Dr. Hughes!

Email your questions to info@elcmdm.org with "Ask Dr. Hughes" in the subject line. Also, include the location of your residence in Miami-Dade and/or Monroe County (e.g. Kendall, Coconut Grove). Research and evaluation analyst Christine Hughes, Ph.D., will answer your questions about child development. Topics can cover language, social skills, play, behavior, motor skills, and thinking and learning from ages birth to 5 years old.

The column is not intended to be a solicitation of business or the furnishing of self-help advice. Readers are strongly urged to consult independent and qualified professionals before making any decisions. The views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily of the ELC.

ELC and You- President's Message



Dear Friends:

I am very excited about a new challenge we have ahead of us that has the potential of significantly improving our state's early education system. Florida is now in the running to receive funding for education through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge federal grant program, eligible for up to \$100 million.

To encourage this effort, on September 1, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners approved legislation sponsored by Commissioner Barbara J. Jordan asking Governor Rick Scott to support Florida's application. The Association of Early Learning Coalitions, the Florida Children's Services Council and many other state partners have been hard at work to educate key decision makers on how Florida's children can benefit from the grant. To solidify Florida's eligibility to apply for the grant, the Joint Legislative Budget Commission approved Florida's acceptance of a \$3.4 million federal grant to establish a home visiting program for at-risk mothers. Without this action by members of our legislature, Florida would not have qualified to apply for the grant.

When Florida receives this award. We will be able to improve the quality of our early education programs and support for early education professionals. More children than ever will enter school with the basic building blocks needed for success in school and in life.

Please join me in thanking all state partners, members of our legislature and Governor Rick Scott for supporting Florida's efforts to improve our early care and education system. Children learn, parents work, and taxpayers get a high return on their investment!

Sincerely,
Evelio C. Torres
President & CEO
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

Local Events for the Whole Family!

First Annual Miami-Dade Feria Para Aprender!

Come learn the steps to guide your child from preschool to college. Thousands of free books! Come see many science exhibits and demonstrations. Talk directly to academic and college experts.

When: Saturday, October 8, 2011

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Where: Miami Dade College Kendall Campus
11011 S.W. 104 St.
Miami, FL 33176

Cost: FREE

For the Feria flyer, please visit http://feriaparaaprender.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Miami_Flyer.pdf.

Miami Children's Expo

This expo will provide you with many shows, specials, and discounts, as well as a ton of FREE products.

When: Saturday, October 15, 2011

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Where: Miami Airport Convention Center

711 N.W. 72 Ave.

Miami, FL 33126

Cost: FREE

For more information, visit

<http://childrensexpos.com/miami/miami-childrens-expo/>.

Fifth Annual Caring for Kids Child Safety Fair

Learn how to stay safe in dangerous situations. Specialists will also be available to conduct free health screenings for children ages 0-5.

When: Saturday, October 22, 2011

Time: 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Where: Miami-Dade College InterAmerican Campus

627 Southwest 27th Avenue #1114

Miami, FL 33135

Cost: FREE

For more information, please contact MDC's Student Life Department at 305-237-6364

or istudentlife@mdc.edu.

Parent Space

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe would like you, our parents, to have an area in the *Parent Link* newsletter that you can call your own. This space will provide advice, tips, jokes, stories, and/or even job opportunities that other local parents wish to share.

So don't be shy; send us something you would like to share at info@elcmdm.org. Please note that included submissions may be edited for clarity, etc. We look forward to hearing from you.

About the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring high-quality early care and education for children in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Through a variety of affordable and innovative early education and voluntary pre-kindergarten programs, the Coalition serves more than 50,000 children ages birth to 9 years old and their families.

Founded in 2000, the Early Learning Coalition is among 31 similar organizations in the State of Florida established following the enactment of the School Readiness Act, which consolidated Florida's early learning services into one integrated program.