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Happy 1st Birthday Parent Link!

It has been a great 1st year, *Parent Link* readers! Thank you for the suggestion emails, questions, and contributions. *Parent Link* has grown from our first issue because of you, and we're happy to provide you with special guest articles and a collection of information and resources.



In this issue of *Parent Link*, you will find a collection of articles from previous issues along with some new information and resources. We hope you enjoy reading it, and we look forward to linking you with more tips, news and information to aid you and your family's early childhood success.

January Issue- Make Sure Your Children's Toys are Safe

By: Christine R. Hughes, Ph.D., ELC Research & Evaluation Analyst

Each holiday season brings many new toys for our children! After the gifts have been unwrapped, parents must always be aware of the potential safety hazards of the thousands of toys intended for young children.

Perhaps the most basic ways to ensure a child's safety when playing with any toy would be by (1) reading the instructions and using the item properly and (2) supervising the child during play. These will often reduce the chance of harm or injury to a child.

Also, there are a few common dangers to watch out for before giving a toy to a young child:

1. sharp edges and sharp points
2. small parts
3. loud noises
4. propelled objects
5. electric toys



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[The Parent Academy](#)

[Legal Services of Greater Miami](#)



Often a toy is thought to be safe and appropriate for kids, but later we realize it poses a danger. Typically in this case, the toy or object will be recalled by the manufacturer. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission monitors and shares information with the public about which toys (and products in general) have been recalled. You can find this valuable information on their [website](#). On the go and need some answers? Access the U.S. Public Interest Research Group's [website](#) from your mobile phone.

Reviewing the safety rules and knowing common hazards to young children will ensure that our children are safe during the holidays, and all the days to come!

References:

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: <http://www.cpsc.gov/National>

Network for Child Care: <http://www.nncc.org/health/toy.safety.html>

Public Interest Research Group: <http://www.uspirg.org/>

February Issue- Obesity: The What and How to Prevent It

By: Bethany Sands, Director of Inclusion

Obesity has become such a problem among children that it is now considered an epidemic by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What is obesity? Obesity is defined as a person who is severely overweight. Children are classified as obese if they weigh 20% more than the ideal weight for their height and age. One in five children in Florida is obese.

Causes of Obesity? The CDC notes that obesity is primarily caused by two factors: diet and physical activity. Children who become obese usually have a higher caloric intake and are limited to no physical activity.

Concerns with Obesity

The CDC reports that obesity can put a child at risk for severe health conditions including:

Physical health issues

- Pediatric hypertension
- Risks of coronary heart disease
- Type II diabetes

Social and emotional issues

- Less acceptance from their peers
- Discrimination from significant adults
- Exhibition of a greater sense of rejection and failure
- Poorer interpersonal relationships
- Limited group and social interests

What can we do?

Obesity is easy to recognize and hard to treat. The University of Michigan recommends that parents monitor the diet and physical activity of their children. Replace fatty foods with healthier options, make sure to control serving sizes, and have them drink water--lots of water.

Monitor safe and regularly-scheduled physical activity. Children should be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day. A weekly plan for activity should include:

- Everyday: 60 minutes of activity such as walking, running, swinging, climbing, playing ball, etc.
- 3-5 times a week: high-energy activity that gets the heart pumping
- 2-3 times a week: leisure activities such as swinging
- TV and computer: 30 minutes a day, but do NOT sacrifice opportunities for physical activity

Teach children to be healthy from the start!

April Issue- Handling Toddler Temper Tantrums

By: Yesenia Reyes, Early Learning Coalition Staff

There comes a time, in every toddler's life, when the most important thing to him or her is to get the bag of cookies which you have repeatedly said you will not hand over. And that's when it starts: the whining, screaming, and stomping of the feet. What is a parent to do in such a situation? Below are some helpful tips and insight from the Child Welfare Information Gateway on how to deal with temper tantrums. And don't worry! Many children grow out of tantrums by age 4.

Toddlers:

- Love to say "No!" "Mine" and "Do it myself!"
- Test rules over and over to see how parents will react.

What You Can Do- The Preventing Stage:

- Offer a variety of fun activities, scheduled play times, and opportunities to explore the world.
- Have a regular sleeping and eating schedule.
- Direct your child's attention to something else.

Ex: "Hey! Look at the big plane in the sky!"

- Anticipate when your child will be disappointed.

Ex: "We are going to buy groceries for dinner. We won't be buying cookies but you can help me pick out some fruit for later."

- Give praise when he or she shows self-control and expresses feelings with words.



How to handle the moment:

- Remain calm. You are a role model for your child.
- Take your child to a quiet place where he or she can calm down safely. Speak softly or play soft music.
- Some children throw tantrums to seek attention. Try ignoring the tantrum but pay attention to your child after he or she calms down.

But most importantly: when your child is having a floor-thumping tantrum, the most important thing you can do is remain calm and wait it out. Do not let your child's behavior cause you to lose control.

Reference:

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/guide2011/tantrums.pdf>

This information was provided by a tip sheet created with input from experts in national organizations that work to protect children and strengthen families. For more information click on the link above or call 800-394-3366.

July Issue- Summer Reading? Tips on Selecting Books for Young Children

By: Bethany Sands, Director of Inclusion

Reading is important and fun to do any time of the year, and summers usually offer nice, sunny afternoons for you to enjoy a great book with your child outdoors. Selecting an age-appropriate book to read may be challenging. Below are tips to guide you in selecting books that will engage your child's development.

Infants 0-6 months

- Simple books with large pictures and bright colors
- Cardboard or "chunky" books are durable and a lot easier to handle
- Foldable books to prop in the crib
- Cloth and vinyl books with pictures of people and familiar objects that can be washed

Infants 6-12 months

- Board books with pictures of babies
- Cardboard or "chunky" books with bright colors. They will be chewed on, and that's okay!
- Books with photos of familiar objects, like balls, balloons and household objects
- Small plastic photo album of friends and family. This can be made using sandwich-size baggies and taping the bottom edges together to make a book. Leave the zip side open and you can change the pictures!



Young Toddlers 12-24 months

- Sturdy books they can carry
- Books with photos of children doing familiar things like sleeping, playing or eating
- Books with more pictures per page
- Bedtime books like "Good Night Moon" by Margaret Wise Brown
- Books with simple rhythms or predictable endings
- Books with animals

Toddlers 2-3 years

- Books that tell simple stories that children can remember and retell (after several readings)
- Rhyming books
- Bedtime books
- Books about colors, counting, ABC's, shapes and sizes
- Animal books and transportation books (cars, trucks, trains, buses, etc.)
- Books about saying hello and good-bye

Hint: You do not have to read the words to tell the story. Talk about the pictures, describe what's happening and name colors and shapes. Let your child help by turning the pages.



Have fun reading with your child!!

For more information, please visit www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders.

August Issue- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Parent Resources

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools offer a great parent resource guide for parents of students with disabilities. According to the guide, a parent is an important member of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Team, which builds the framework for your child's education. Below are two of the six resources the guide offers.

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc.

Parent Education Network (PEN) Project

Contact persons:

Ms. Margarita Montalvo: 305-378-1336

Ms. Myriam Orta: 786-715-3395

Website: www.fndfl.org

Assistance in:

- Individual assistance on educational issues
- Workshops in English, Spanish and Creole
- Understanding the IEP process, IDEA and other topics related to students with special needs

Parent to Parent of Miami, Inc.

Community Parent Resource Center

7990 SW 117 Ave., Suite 200

Miami, FL 33183

Telephone: 305-271-9797

Fax: 305-271-6628

Website: www.ptopmiami.org

Assistance in:

- Individual peer support, assistance and counseling on special education issues provided by Education and Support Specialists in English, Spanish, and Creole
- Parent skill-building workshops in English, Spanish and Creole
- Information and guidance regarding your child's disability.

For a copy of the complete guide, in English, Spanish or Creole, visit <http://forms.dadeschools.net/webpdf/6334.pdf>

Reference:

Miami-Dade County Public Schools: <http://www.dadeschools.net/>

Ask Dr. Hughes- "Is being shy around family normal for a 4-year-old?"

This month, a mother of a 4-year-old boy in Kendall asks if her son acting shy around family and friends and at school is normal.

There are many factors that can play into whether a child acts shy around other people--even people who are familiar to him, like family members. One main factor is temperament, which is considered to be a biologically based way that we react to the world, both physically and emotionally. Research has shown that some children are more inhibited, leading them to often act shy and withdrawn, while other children are uninhibited, leading them to be very outgoing and social. So, being a shy child (and even a shy adult) may be part of what makes you a unique individual because of your temperament.

Also, some fear or shyness when your family leaves you at preschool is normal. This anxiety can be very strong if a child has only been cared for by his family and has not had much experience in a preschool setting. Often, a child will be upset right after his caregiver leaves, but once distracted by the activities available, he will calm down and begin to enjoy his day. If the child's anxiety is so strong that he cannot be consoled or distracted after his caregiver leaves, it may indicate a more serious anxiety problem. I would encourage caregivers to ask their child's teacher to see how long it takes him to transition and become involved in the classroom activities after you leave. If the child's anxiety is strong enough to disrupt his daily functioning, then speaking with a mental health professional may be a wise next step to understanding his or her behavior. But shyness and caution in social situations is common and typical in preschoolers experiencing new situations or some other transition in their lives. Be sure to think about all the factors that may play a role in your child's shyness.

Do you have any questions about child development between the ages of 0 to 5 years old? Then ask Dr. Hughes! Please email your questions to info@elcmdm.org with "Ask Dr. Hughes" in the subject line. Also, include the name of the town/city in which you reside in Miami-Dade or Monroe County (e.g. Coconut Grove, Kendall, Key West).

The information provided in this column released by the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe courtesy of Dr. Hughes is not intended to be used as psychological, mental health or medical service. As laws, details, and personal situations vary from person to person and state to state, articles and content contained in the newsletter are not and cannot be used as a substitute for legal, parental, health, mental health, or any other advice.

Reading Rockets- Literacy in the Sciences

Skills and studies in the science and mathematics fields are one of today's workforce's highest demands. That is why it is important for you as a parent to encourage your child's growth and curiosity in these areas. A great new resource to use is Reading Rockets' "[Literacy in the Sciences](#)" series. Predicting, understanding cause and effect, understanding sequence and building background knowledge are some of the skills the series and website have to offer

- Here are some other things you will find:
- "Literacy in the Sciences" parent tip sheet (in English and Spanish)
 - Great books for kids about science and math
 - Science resources
 - Web Resources



And much more!

Reading Rockets is an education initiative of WETA, a public television and radio station in the nation's capital. It is funded by a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

For more information and to view the full website for the "Literacy in the Sciences" series, visit

http://www.readingrockets.org/extras/stem_series/.

2011-2012 Flu Season Recommendations: Who should be vaccinated?

Along with the winter season comes the flu season. But who in your family should be vaccinated? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the following people should consider getting a flu shot.

- Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year. This recommendation has been in place since February 24, 2010 when CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted for "universal" flu vaccination in the U.S. to expand protection against the flu to more people.

- While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that certain people get vaccinated either because they are at high-risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications. These individuals include:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Health care workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

For a complete list of commonly asked questions and answers, along with fact sheets, please visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>.

Help the ELC Raise Funds through TICKETS fore CHARITY

The Early Learning Coalition is participating in the TICKETS fore CHARITY program, a unique fundraising initiative designed to improve the quality of life for children and families in the communities where PGA TOUR and Champions Tour tournaments are held. By purchasing tickets to this event, you will be directly affecting the funding of programs through the Early Learning Coalition. One hundred percent (100%) of the proceeds of tickets bought on behalf of the ELC will come straight back to our organization.



For an order form to purchase tickets, click on the image above or visit www.ticketmaster.com. The promotional code for the ELC is CCENV9V. Please note that the code is case sensitive.

Local Events for the Whole Family!

Zoo Lights

See dozens of bright, animal-shaped lights! Enjoy "ice skating," hippo slide rides, hot chocolate, a picture with Santa and more.

When: December 16 - 23, 2011

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Where: Zoo Miami

12400 S.W. 152 St.

Miami, FL 33177

Cost: \$5/person

For more information and for ticket purchase information, visit

www.zoomiami.org.

Passport to Imagination: Mexico Poinsettia Card

The arts and craft store Michael's offers holiday craft projects for you and your family. Use the Mexican Christmas flower to decorate a sweet holiday card!

When: Saturday, December 17, 2011

Time: Noon - 2:00 p.m.

For more information and to locate your nearest Michael's store, visit

www.michaels.com, or call 1-800-MICHAELS

Family Holiday Festival

This festival provides gifts to underprivileged children in our community. There will be a bounce house, face painting, food and entertainment.

When: Wednesday, December 21, 2011

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Where: 10071 N.W. 7 Ave.

Miami, FL 33150

Cost: FREE

For more information, contact Sade Young, 305-403-7777 or

seventhavemedicalplaza@yahoo.com

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 prekindergarten programs, the Coalition serves more than 50,000 children ages birth to 5-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.