

# health matters

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Volume 2, Issue 7

## August 4th is National Kids Day!

To celebrate **National Kids Day!** this month's issue of Health Matters is devoted especially to the Children we serve, and the Kids you love!

Here's what you'll find in this month's special issue: • *Tips on preventing childhood obesity*  
• *Summer Brain Busters for the kids* • *Water Safety Tips/Questions & Answers on Pool Safety*

health matters

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## Childhood Obesity is on the Rise

### Obesity rates in children continue to climb.

Eating more and exercising less are the two most commonly mentioned culprits, but what are the best ways to reverse this trend? Dr. LuzElva Tristan, MD, ECRMC's Pediatric Department Chief, provides some of the answers.

It's estimated that 10% of children, or at least 155 million youngsters, are overweight or obese. It is most severe in the United States, where the prevalence of

obese children aged 5 to 17 is about 10% and more than 50% are overweight. Children become overweight for a variety of reasons. The most common causes, according to Tristan, are genetic factors, lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, or a combination of these factors. A physical exam and some blood tests can rule out the possibility of a medical condition.

Although weight problems run in families, Tristan says, "not all children with a family history of obesity will be overweight. Children whose parents or brothers or sisters are overweight may be at an increased risk of becoming overweight themselves, but this can be link to shared family behaviors such as eating and activity habits."

A child's total diet and activity level play an important role in determining a child's weight. For example, the average child spends approximately 24 hours each week watching television. As computers and video games become increasingly popular, the number of hours of inactivity may only increase.

### What Diseases Are Obese Children at Risk For?

Obese children are at risk for a number of conditions, including:

- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Early heart disease
- Diabetes
- Bone problems
- Skin conditions such as heat rash, fungal infections and "skin tags"/ dark skin tone on neck area.

*"Fatty streaks are seen in the aorta as early as 3 years of age. Damaged coronary arteries are seen by 10 years of age. So obesity in children is a major health problem that is getting worse, not better."*



Snacks should be nutritional, such as fruits, and vegetables.

Along with the increase in childhood obesity we're beginning to see an epidemic of adult onset, or type 2, diabetes in children 9 to 12. **If that child develops diabetes before they're 14 years of age they are shortening their life span by 17 to 27 years.** This has reached such a state that this may be the first generation in which the parents outlive the children.

### So the question is, is my child obese?

For children, we use the body mass index, which your pediatricians office can calculate for you. "As a general rule, we consider a child obese if they're above the 95th percentile," says Tristan.

Unfortunately, most parents don't consider their child obese.

### What can you do to improve the situation in your children?

First of all says Tristan, "realize that foods of childhood influence lifelong health. Height within the first five years is based on genetics and nutrition. Weight, the number and size of fat cells a child has before 6 years of age, are set for life, so a fat child ordinarily becomes a fat adult. Food preferences and eating habits are formed in childhood."

### Recommendations:

Cut back on juice and high-sugar drinks.

Active kids are more likely to have healthy weight and less likely to be overweight adults. Parents should sign up children for activities and make plans so they can be with friends in sports.

See Obesity, next page



Don't eat junk food yourself. Set a good example, and try to eat as a family.

## SUMMER Brain Busters

Match these words to their definitions below:

- a. Allergy
- b. Antibiotics
- c. Asthma
- d. Bacteria
- e. Bruise
- f. Cartilage
- g. Dislocate
- h. Fracture
- i. Pulse
- j. Veins & Arteries

1. We all have places on our bodies that bend, like elbows and knees. These bendable places are called joints. When a bone gets pulled out of its joint from a fall or some other accident, it's called a \_\_\_\_\_. To fix it, a doctor has to put the bone back into the joint and let it heal.
2. These awesome medicines attack bacteria that make you sick. Want to hear something weird? Some \_\_\_\_\_ are made from fuzzy mold (penicillin comes from orange mold)!
3. Someone with \_\_\_\_\_ can have trouble breathing because of problems with the airways, the tubes that carry air into the lungs. The airways can get irritated, swollen (puffed up), and narrow (like a pinched straw), which makes it difficult to breathe. Of course, breathing is really important, so someone who has \_\_\_\_\_ may need to see a doctor regularly and carry special medicine to make it easier to breathe.

4. Achoo! Many things can trigger \_\_\_\_\_ like pollen, certain animals, foods, or a bee sting. \_\_\_\_\_ can make your eyes water and your nose run, make your skin itchy and bumpy, make your throat and ears sore, and make your tummy ache.
5. If you're feeling crummy, it's probably because nasty \_\_\_\_\_ or some other germs have gotten into your body and made you sick. \_\_\_\_\_ are so tiny that you can't see them with just your eyes, but there are thousands, millions, even billions of them all over you, inside and out! This might sound kind of gross, but lots of \_\_\_\_\_ actually help our bodies.
6. When you bang a part of your body against something, your skin might turn different colors where you bumped it. That splotch of purple, green, blue, and black is called a \_\_\_\_\_, and it's caused by blood leaking from broken blood vessels (the tubes that contain blood) under your skin. Because you didn't cut yourself, the blood from the damaged blood vessels can't come out and instead gets trapped under the skin. A bruise may look icky, but your body will make it disappear in no time!

Y	A	E	E	N	I	P	S	C	N	A	K	E
B	S	M	Q	N	W	K	L	F	P	A	P	S
O	T	E	B	T	I	I	T	P	Z	O	E	G
S	H	R	J	U	N	C	E	R	C	G	N	N
E	M	G	D	I	L	N	I	S	A	E	K	U
H	A	E	C	T	D	A	O	D	S	E	Q	L
C	P	N	J	I	S	H	N	R	E	V	H	Y
T	I	C	X	R	T	A	U	C	A	M	C	A
I	L	Y	J	E	B	N	C	H	E	T	O	R
T	L	K	T	L	A	T	I	P	S	O	H	X
S	S	S	L	A	B	O	R	A	T	O	R	Y
S	U	R	G	E	O	N	R	O	T	C	O	D

Find these words in the word search to the left:

- Ambulance
- Appendix
- Asthma
- Bandage
- Cast
- Clinic
- Doctor
- Emergency
- Heart
- Hospital
- Laboratory
- Lungs
- Medicine
- Nurse
- Pills
- Spine
- Stethoscope
- Stitches
- Surgeon
- Xray

7. Your beating heart creates a \_\_\_\_\_. Your heart has to push so much blood through your body that you can feel a little thump in your arteries each time the heart beats! Wow! The most common places to feel a \_\_\_\_\_ is on your wrist and your neck. So try to find your \_\_\_\_\_ and feel the beat!
8. When a bone breaks, it's called a \_\_\_\_\_. If you ever hurt yourself and think you might have a \_\_\_\_\_, don't move! Wait until someone comes to help you because \_\_\_\_\_ only get worse when they're moved around. Usually, a doctor will put a cast around the \_\_\_\_\_ to protect the area and help it heal.
9. Touch the tip of your nose or the top of your ear - that's \_\_\_\_\_. It's bendable, not hard like bone. This flexible material can be found in various parts of your body, including between bones so they don't rub together.
10. If you've ever seen a road map, you probably saw many roads going here, there, and everywhere. Your body has a highway system all its own that sends blood to and from your body parts. It's called the circulatory system, and the roads are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Congratulations! You've just completed the brain buster challenge!

\*Answers on next page.

# WATER SAFETY!



## What every parent needs to know!

Jimmy Luker pleads guilty to being a fanatic about water safety. He thinks parents should keep it as a primary concern if they have both small children and a backyard swimming pool, or even if they just look forward to occasional family outings at beaches.

The Lukers' pool nearly took the life a year ago of an 11-month-old daughter—nearly, because today she is a healthy, normal two year old to which he credits paramedics, emergency room doctors and medical specialists who took over from the ER staff.

Luker, who owns the Central Medical Supply, in El Centro is so appreciative he recently donated a fleet of wheel chairs to the El Centro Regional Medical Center and is now engaged in making radio and television commercials calling attention to water safety imperatives.

The Lukers had been lounging at poolside with their two daughters, Jordan, now 2, and her older sister, Jocelyn. The family decided to go back into the house but the patio door apparently was not securely closed.

"It was only a couple of minutes when we missed the baby," Luker recalls and began a frantic search for her. "She must have crawled very fast because when Jocelyn dashed outside to check the patio she found Jordan face down in the pool. She pulled her out and Luker began CPR on the infant as 911 was called.

The paramedics took over and both restored and lost a pulse on the way to the Emergency Department at El Centro Regional. There, doctors managed to restore a pulse and get the infant stabilized enough for transport by air to Children's Hospital in San Diego.

"That was the first steps in saving my daughter's life," Luker recalls, "but then came the hardest part for us." Jordan was in the hospital for eight days and on life support for much of that time. An MRI subsequently showed normal brain function.

But Luker recalls, "for several days, we didn't know what our daughter would be like when she woke up."

*Water Safety also is high on the priority list of the San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter of the American Red Cross and. Under the guidance of its aquatic director, Jessica Belcher, frequent classes are conducted to train lifeguards. The ARC also has a long list of dos and don'ts regarding water safety and Luker buys into their list but adds a few of his own:*

- **Put up a childproof fence around your private backyard pool and be vigilant about gate closure.**
- **Always be there and watching when children are playing in or near the pool.**
- **Have a telephone close at hand.**
- **Have life preservers at the ready.**



*The ARC also suggests:*

- **Children should use private pools only with parental consent and under adult supervision.**
- **Watch out for the "dangerous too's"—too tired, too cold, too much sun, too much strenuous activity.**

*For the beaches, the ARC recommends:*

- **Never swim alone, use the buddy system.**
- **Stay within the designated swimming area within the visibility of a lifeguard.**
- **Always use a feet first entry into the water until depths are ascertained for safe diving.**
- **Know the potential hazards of the beach area, currents, depths, obstructions, rip currents, long shore currents and other water conditions.**
- **Stay away from piers, pilings and jetties.**
- **Keep on the lookout for aquatic life. Water plants and animals can be dangerous.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What precautions should parents take to keep germs from spreading in pool water?** Everyone should always shower or bathe before and after swimming. If your child is not fully toilet-trained, it is important for him or her to wear a waterproof diaper in the pool. Put a fresh diaper on the child just before he or she gets into the water.

**My children often get swimmer's ear. How can I prevent it?** You can use a prescription product containing acetic acid otic solution and put drops in your children's ears before and after they swim. Visit your pediatrician for more detailed information or a prescription.

**What's the earliest age recommended for children to start swimming lessons?** Your child's readiness for swimming lessons depends entirely on his or her comfort level in the water. Before their first birthday, some babies love to splash around while a parent holds them. Others, however, are not keen on getting in the water. In general, children can start learning to swim around the time they learn to ride a bike, which is near the time they enter school, at age 4 or 5. A parent or other responsible person should always stay in the water with a child age 5 or younger. Beginning swimmers should stay in the shallow end of the pool and be closely supervised. More experienced swimmers still need supervision by certified lifeguards during water activities.

**Can a child swim with a scraped knee or a cold? What about right after lunch?** It's OK for a child to swim with a scraped knee – if it's not bleeding. Likewise, it's fine for children with colds to swim, as long as they have energy and feel well enough to do so. It's OK for kids to swim after lunch, unless lunch was a large feast and the child feels lethargic. After a snack, children don't have to sit beside the pool for half an hour. Let them go into the water and enjoy it.

**Can a child with a cast go swimming?** Some casts are water-safe. Check with your physician to see which type your child has. Traditional plaster casts over a cloth wrapping are not water-safe.

**Is it risky for a child to swallow pool water?** Children are always going to take a few gulps of pool water at one time or another, especially when first learning to swim. A little swallowed pool water is no cause for worry, but it's never OK to use the pool as a source of drinking water.

## Childhood Obesity is on the Rise

*"In June 2002 the American Academy of Pediatrics made these recommendations: Two hours is a safe limit for TV; greater than two hours increases the risk for weight gain."*

*Obesity, from previous page.*

No eating while watching TV.

Kids naturally like sweet and salty foods. They reject the unknown, the unfamiliar. "It may be good for me, but if the taste doesn't taste good, I'm not going to eat it," is the attitude of most children. Use a low-key approach. Children want what mom and dad are eating. Set a good example. Put balanced meals on the table, and offer foods 15 times, not just two or three. Keep undesirable foods out of the house; restricting foods leads to thinking "I better eat it now, it's my only chance."

**The American Academy of Pediatrics says that children younger than 2 should not watch television. Not only is it related to attention deficit problems, but it's also associated with obesity and aggressiveness.**

**The average child sees 10,000 food commercials each year, mostly for candy, fast foods, soft drinks, and sugary cereals.**

Pediatricians recommend breastfeeding for at least six months and delaying solid food introduction during infancy, which has been proven to decrease the risk for adult obesity.

"You cannot rely upon school to meet the requirement of physical activity with your children" urges Tristan. Parents will have to set the example. Studies show it doesn't take that much activity to get a tremendous return on investment.

"So if parents can just spend 20 to 30 minutes involved in some type of activity with their children, whether walking, or sports," advises Tristan, "that may be the most beneficial thing they can do in the early years. You can't rely upon sports or PE, because it's simply not going to work."

"If you can set the example, exercise with your children," says Tristan. Soccer; basketball; swimming; all sorts of things. If the parent and child are overweight, both can benefit from restricting calories and exercise.

### In Summary:

- **First of all, restrict the calories.** If you cut your calories by 500 calories a day you'll lose 1/2 pound a week. With 1,000 fewer calories a day you'd lose at least a pound a week.
- **Consume the calories as follows:** 25% for breakfast, 50% for lunch, and 25% for the evening meal, if you need to lose weight.
- **Eat as a family.**
- **Try to eat before 7 p.m.,** because after that you're more likely to store fat.
- **Don't snack** unless you snack on nutritional foods, fruits, and vegetables.
- **Exercise at the end of the day,** prior to the evening meal. Not only does it help with stress, it helps with the evening meal and helps keep the caloric count down.

\*For additional information contact Dr. Tristan at 768-5246, or visit your pediatrician.

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Staff Writer Robert V. Liggett  
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## Pediatrics Unit Gets a New Look

**Work on converting a former adult unit into a new 22-bed Pediatrics Unit, with a zoo-like décor designed for children, is expected to get underway in about a month at the El Centro Regional Medical Center.**

The South Wing has been in temporary use for pediatrics patients during the refurbishing of the present 12-bed Pediatrics Unit in preparation for its reuse during construction on the new unit. The Pediatrics Unit has a recent history of being critically overburdened by a heavy patient census.

The South Wing renovation will represent an investment of more than \$800,000 by

the hospital. The project also is a harbinger of a significant change in the hospital's future financial planning structure as even now a hospital foundation is being organized to underwrite such building and equipment needs.

Approval of the South Wing plans by the Office of State Health Planning and Development, a wing of the state Department of Health, is expected momentarily. Construction will begin as soon as bids are received and contracts let.

Jim Dikes, the hospital project manager, said the remodeling should take about eight months.

The new unit will increase pediatrics bed capacity from 12 to 22 and will include two

isolation rooms, an activities (play) room and an adjacent outside courtyard with playground equipment.

An interior decorator designed the jungle theme replete with various animals as a means of interesting children to find and identify.

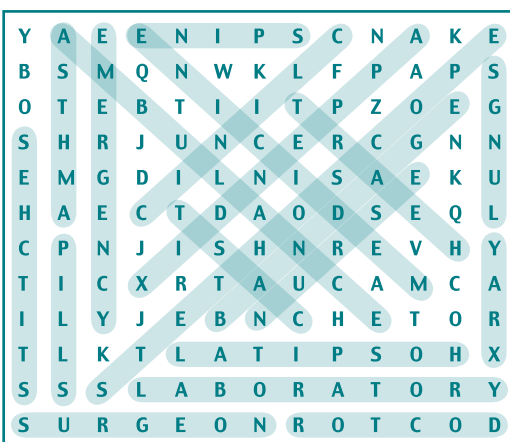
When used formerly for medical-surgical patients, the South Wing was a 32-bed facility. The bed capacity has been trimmed to 22 for the new Pediatrics Unit to provide more private rooms.

Meanwhile, a project costing more than \$200,000 to upgrade patient rooms in the Obstetrics section is underway and the first of the rooms slated for revamping is nearing completion as a showcase for the planned changes.

The hospital will convert present two-bed wards into private rooms, retiling floors, redecorating and re-outfitting all rooms. Existing labor, delivery, postpartum, recovery (LDPR) rooms are not included in the remodeling. The hospital worked with a community advisory committee to work out plans for the renovations.

The work is concentrating on one or two rooms at a time in order to keep the department functioning during the change-over. Existing labor and delivery rooms also are to be renovated and upgraded.

### Answers from Summer Brain Busters on previous page:



Answers to matching words and definitions:

1. (G) Disclosure
2. (B) Antibiotics
3. (C) Asthma
4. (A) Allergy
5. (D) Bacteria
6. (E) Bruise
7. (I) Pulse
8. (H) Fracture
9. (F) Cartilage
10. (J) Veins & Arteries