SUN SAFETY WORKS — If you do it!

Adults know about, but do not practice safe sun exposure for children or for themselves. A June 2002 report in Pediatrics found that by their teens, many kids had frequent sunburns. Many were getting burned to get tanned and failing to use well-publicized protective measures. Unprotected sun exposure during childhood tends to be a lifelong habit and contributes directly to lifetime skin cancer as well as premature and more severe signs of aging of the skin. These signs of aging include more and earlier wrinkles, and changes in the thickness of the skin. Limiting sun exposure during childhood and adolescence can decrease life-time risk of some types of skin cancer by 78%.

The sun’s ultraviolet light does the damage – both UVA and UVB. UVB penetrates the skin more and does more harm to the skin than UVA.

Unprotected exposure of the eyes to sunshine is very harmful also. The front parts of the eyes absorb nearly all the ultraviolet light, contributing to development of cataracts and other less common eye disorders.

Sun protection is for everyone. Early and ongoing education about sun safety seems to work. Rising rates of

(Continued on page 2)

HEALTH AND SAFETY CALENDAR
Use the calendar to plan ahead.

July

♦ Transportation Safety: Use the insert in this issue to involve staff and parents in safe walking and riding. Note the news: New PA law requires use of booster seats to age 8 as of 2/03. Deadly crashes show that 15 passenger vans are not safe for transporting groups of kids. For more information call: 1-800-car-belt.

♦ National Therapeutic Recreation Week: July 14-18. Contact the National Recreation & Parks Association for playground safety information www.nrpa.org, click on National Playground Safety Institute. Phone (703) 858-0784. E-mail info@nrpa.org.

August

♦ Amblyopia Awareness Month: Be sure that at three years of age, all children begin annual screening for visual acuity and stereopsis (use of both eyes together.) If the child’s clinician does not do this screening, contact PA Association for the Blind: www.pablind.org. (717) 234-3261. E-mail pabkg@paonline.com

♦ National Immunization Awareness Month: Use the 2003 Immunization Schedule and contact ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA for technical assistance on how to be sure all children are up-to-date. (See the Q&A on page 3 for more information.)

(continued on p.4)
ALLERGIES—A MISERY

Many people have allergic diseases. For example, up to 40% of children have runny nose symptoms caused by allergy. Runny nose, sinusitis, skin problems, asthma, and food reactions can be caused by allergies. Allergy is the body’s over-use of protective mechanisms that are intended to reduce harm from foreign materials that get into the body. After the first exposure to a foreign material, the body reacts more quickly and more vigorously each time. This reaction protects against recurrent infections. An allergic reaction doesn’t happen at the first exposure. The trigger for an allergic reaction is a foreign material entering the body by being eaten, inhaled or coming in contact with a body surface.

Child Care Allergy Reduction Tips

To Prevent and Reduce Allergy Problems:

- Promote breastfeeding—it reduces allergy and helps lifelong health in many ways
- Discourage early introduction of solid foods, and “at risk” foods (e.g. milk products other than human milk, eggs, peanuts)
- Reduce dust mite levels by frequent washing and/or vacuuming of objects in contact with skin or that might hold skin flakes (e.g. bed linens, furniture covers, rugs)
- Avoid exposure to animal dander, especially for those who are prone to allergy
- Ask parents and staff about allergy problems so you can target allergy reduction measures to those who need them
- Teach everyone about allergy. Contact allergy education support groups for information about specific types of allergy (www.healthfinder.gov)
- Use the medications and environmental controls that the allergic person’s doctor recommends
- Be aware of all common allergy triggers in settings used by someone who is known to have at least one allergy problem
- Reduce indoor pollution (e.g. mold, smoke, fumes from cleaning and other chemicals)

Sun Safety Works—If you do it!

(Continued from page 1)

skin cancer deaths in sunny Australia leveled off after routine early and ongoing education began.

Be sure your program has and uses a written policy that covers how the program protects children and staff from sun damage. Teaching children how to protect themselves from sun injury should be a part of every early childhood curriculum. Pennsylvania child care providers can order and get 2 hours of state-authorized training credit for completing the Sun Safety Self-Learning Module that helps teachers learn how to educate children about this topic. The module includes the California Early Childhood Protection Curriculum and Hot Shots Video. You can keep this video to continue teaching sun safety to children. (See the order form for Self-Learning Modules with this newsletter.)

Three rules to remember:

1. AVOID SUN EXPOSURE WHEN YOU CAN
2. USE CLOTHING AND COVER
3. SMEAR SUN PROTECTION PRODUCTS ON EXPOSED SKIN
**Q:** Is it dangerous for children or adults to work or play close to a cell phone antenna tower? Our child care playground is right next to one.

**A:** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) refer to fixed antennas for wireless telecommunications by a few different names. You may hear them called cellular base stations, cell stations, PCS (“Personal Communications Service”) stations or telephone transmission towers. These base stations consist of antennas and electronic equipment. Since these antennas need to be high in the air, they are often mounted on towers, poles, water tanks, or rooftops.

The FDA says that electromagnetic radiofrequency energy (RF) transmitted from these stations travels outward toward the horizon in a relatively narrow path. As with all forms of electromagnetic energy, the power decreases rapidly as you move away from the antenna. Therefore, the radiofrequency energy exposure on the ground is much less than the exposure in the path of the transmitted radio signal high in the air. Measurements made close to cellular and PCS base station antennas on towers confirmed that ground-level exposures are thousands of times less than the exposure limits adopted by the FCC.

For more information and answers to other cell phone safety questions, visit the FDA website at: http://www.fda.gov/cellphones/.

**Q:** It is hard to meet the DPW, DOH and Head Start requirements for documenting that children are up-to-date with recommended immunizations and screening tests. Why can’t we leave it to the doctors to take care of this? What can make the task easier for us?

**A:** Child care programs provide the safety net for children who don’t get what they need in a timely way for a variety of reasons. Parents and doctors miss opportunities to keep children up-to-date. Some reasons this happens are: the child is ill at the time of the appointment, misses a well child appointment, or has a needed service overlooked. Child care providers have a special duty to be sure children receive their well-care services. Children in group care are at greater risk of vaccine-preventable disease, and they must be healthy to learn optimally.

ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA has model letters to parents and doctors, as well as information on computer software and other tools that reduce the burden of tracking whether the child is up-to-date. Visit the website www.wellcaretracker.org for some of these tools or contact ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA at 800-243-2357 or ecels@paaap.org to request technical assistance.

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**Germs Get On and Through Gloves**

Latex and vinyl gloves pick up germs from touched surfaces. The gloves easily develop holes from contact with nails, jewelry, hand lotions and any pointy object. Latex gloves are the most popular type. Their elasticity gives the best fit, but warmth and moisture from contact with skin makes them swell and develop microscopic holes that allow germs through. Vinyl gloves are less expensive. Since they do not stretch, they fit like a plastic bag and puncture easily.

Remember gloves can transfer germs to other touched surfaces. Wearing gloves is optional for diapering, but required for handling bloody fluids. After removing gloves, ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS!
Nutrition Choices that
• Promote Oral Health
• Prevent Obesity
• Reduce Constipation

Dental caries are so common that many people mistakenly think having “cavities” is inevitable. Tooth decay can be prevented by avoiding between-meal foods that contain lots of sugars and starches. Sugars and starches feed the bacteria on the teeth. Then the bacteria make acid that eats away the tooth structure, making holes called dental caries. When child care providers teach children to prefer foods that reduce the risk of tooth decay, these choices help limit excess calories and provide the fiber that prevents constipation too.

Good choices are:

• Raw foods combined with cooked foods to promote chewing and saliva production. Saliva rinses food off the teeth. Also, uncooked fruits and vegetables give a full feeling that reduces over-eating and moves food along well in the digestive tract.

• Drinking water as a beverage. Drinking water during meals and snacks rinses sugars and starches off the teeth. Drinking lots of water helps to keep stools soft too.

• Dairy products as a part of meals and snacks and daily tooth brushing with a small amount of fluoride toothpaste. Calcium and the right amount of fluoride help put back the hard surface on the teeth that bacteria erode (Use only a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and teach kids not to eat toothpaste.)

Dentists use sealants for children to fill deep crevices that tend to trap food. These crevices give bacteria a lovely home to do their nasty work. Usually dentists put sealants on permanent molars, but the dentist may decide to put a sealant on any tooth that catches food.

Brushing at least twice a day and flossing at least once a day helps remove food and the spongy stuff called plaque from the teeth. Plaque builds up at the gum line, providing a place for bacteria to grow.

Before you brush your teeth, rub a tooth pick or Popsicle stick along the edge where your gums meet your teeth. It won’t take long to pick up the soft white or yellowish material that is plaque. Children have lots of plaque on their teeth and need help to brush often enough to remove it.

(continued on page 8)

September

♦ National Food Safety Education Month: Food poisoning is a common cause of diarrhea and vomiting and rarely, even death. Check food safety practices in your program. Start with how parents prepare foods brought from home. Include every step, from food selection until the food is eaten. For some free tips on food storage, order the Food Safety Educator described on page 5 or visit the sample page from the Food Safety Trainer Essentials on the web site of the National Restaurant Education Foundation at www.nraef.org. Consider having a staff member take a certifying training course as a food handler. Call (800) 765-2122 or e-mail info@foodtrain.org. If you use the Child and Adult Care Food Program, ask your contact person how to arrange for free food safety training for staff.

♦ Family Health and Fitness Days USA: September 27-30 is the focus of events all over the country to promote family involvement in physical fitness, one of the national health goals. You can host an event or join another community agency’s event. Visit www.fitnessday.com/family or call (800) 828-8225.
New Guidelines for Using Hand Sanitizers

In October 2002, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new recommendations for hand hygiene in health care settings that included using alcohol-based hand rubs. These recommendations for increased use of alcohol-based hand rubs in health care settings do not apply to child care. According to the CDC, “Hand washing with soap and water remains a sensible strategy for hand hygiene in non-health care settings and is recommended by CDC and other experts.” The guideline for health care settings emphasizes that the hand rubs (also called hand sanitizers) can only be used on visibly clean hands.

Hand sanitizer products have drawbacks. They are more expensive than soap and water. They must be stored as flammable chemicals and as toxic products. A small amount of a hand sanitizer is poisonous if ingested. Many users fail to apply enough hand sanitizer to keep their hands wet with the chemical for the minimum required contact time of 15 seconds. The wall dispensers get clogged up and fail to deliver the amount of product required. The disposable bottles are easily put where children can access them.

In child care, hand soiling often involves visible contamination. So, in child care, even though hand sanitizer products may be more portable than sinks, washing with soap and water is best. Caregivers and children need hand hygiene many times a day when their hands are visibly soiled by lunches partially eaten, handling reusable play materials like sand or doughy materials, playing in shared water or playground dirt, using finger paints, removing and replacing shoes. See the box on page 6 for a list of when hands must be cleaned adapted from Caring for Our Children, the national health and safety standards. Remember, hand sanitizers are not cleaning agents. They sanitize visibly clean hands.

The difference in time required to use a hand sanitizer properly versus hand washing is not significant. Compare 15 seconds of rubbing after applying a hand sanitizer versus a hand washing routine using a 10 second lather with water wetting and rinsing before and after the lather.

(continued on page 6)
ECELS—Healthy Child Care PA has a new Fact Sheet that goes over the key elements of hand hygiene. Research shows over and over again that handwashing is essential to prevent spread of infections in child care. All staff should review the new Fact Sheet on Hand Hygiene and be evaluated on a regular basis by peers and supervisors to identify and correct gaps in practice. Some of the information from the Fact Sheet is on this page. You can print out the whole Fact Sheet from www.paaap.org (click on ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA). You can also request a copy by fax (610-520-9177), E-mail (ecels@paaap.org), or use of the ECELS Order Form on page 7.

When to Wash:

- Upon arrival for the day
- When moving from one group to another
- Before and after:
  - Eating, handling food or feeding a child
  - Giving medication
  - Playing in water that is used by more than one person
- After:
  - Diapering
  - Using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet
  - Handling body fluid from sneezes, noses, mouths or sores
  - Handling uncooked food, especially meat and poultry
  - Handling pets and other animals
  - Playing in sandboxes or on the playground
  - Cleaning or handling the garbage


Rings: Wear only simple finger bands so you can easily clean and sanitize under and around them.

Adapted with permission from “2002 Update on Hand Hygiene in Child (Day) Care Settings” Exchange, March 2003. For full text of the article go to the free resources area of the EXCHANGE website www.childcareexchange.com
HEALTH LINK continues to spread the news about useful health and safety websites. Some of the information on the Internet is reliable and some is not. Knowing whether you are receiving someone’s fantasy or good evidence-based information is tough. What you see on the Internet presented as new science may be offered by someone who seems to have impressive credentials. Sometimes this type of information is just an opinion or has been refuted by someone else’s well-done research. So how do you know?

Use the following six rules to decide if a website is trustworthy:
1. The website clearly states its purpose and the sponsors do not have a commercial interest. (Non-profit organizations use .org Internet addresses.)
2. The website separates advertising from health information.
3. The sources are reliable, well-known organizations recognized by experts you trust.
4. Information is kept up-to-date and links to other websites meet these same rules.
5. The website offers a way to contact the people who run the site.
6. The website tells you the information it collects about you and how it will be protected.

For dependable and reliable information on health and safety issues, use www.healthfinder.gov. This website is maintained by federal health agencies and is more likely to direct you to good sources. Now the US Department of Health and Human Services has a website that can help kids be healthy and have fun. School-age child care programs can use this site as a target for kids to do safe Internet surfing. Staff can lift off contests, games and activities to organize as part of the curriculum. To visit this site, go to www.healthfinder.gov/kids.

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Web Wandering?

REQUESTING PRINT MATERIAL AND ADVICE ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

ECELS ORDER FORM

(Pennsylvania Child Care Providers & Pennsylvania Health Consultants Only)

To receive a handout listed below, check the box and return the form with a self-addressed, stamped business envelope to PA AAP, ECELS-HCCPA, Rosemont Business Campus, 919 Conestoga Road, Bldg. 2, Suite 307, Rosemont, PA 19010-1353.

Handouts

Health & Safety Training Opportunities: Use the training request forms to order the Transportation Safety Self-Learning Module and the Sun Safety Self-Learning Module. These are timely topics right now.

☐ The Facts About Vaccines (a fact sheet and an order form for more copies)

☐ Hand Hygiene Fact Sheet

Beginning with this issue, you will find that Health Link contains more website addresses where good materials are posted so you can obtain updated materials when you need them, using your computer and printer. Many useful materials are located on the PA AAP website, ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA page. To find ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA on the PA AAP website, sign on to the Internet, type into the internet address box on your computer screen “http://www.paaap.org” or “http://paaap.org”. When the PA AAP web page opens, use your mouse to put the cursor on “ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA” in the left border or frame of the page, and then click on it. If you don’t have a computer with a printer, we may be able to fax some materials to you. Fax your request to (610) 520-9177. You can also send your questions and your requests for materials to ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA by email to ecels@paaap.org.
Tooth brushing in child care is a good daily lesson. For each child, you'll need a tooth brush labeled with the child’s name, a pea-sized portion of toothpaste for the child to pick up with the tooth brush from the edge of a cup or a piece of wax paper, a cup of water and a place to store the brush to dry, bristles up. Teach children to brush all surfaces to remove food and plaque. For parents, give out reminders that by 3 years of age, children need routine visits with oral health professionals to check the teeth and remove plaque build-up.

Adapted from an article prepared by Karin Mille, MS, RD, Public Health Nutrition Consultant, Preventive Oral Health Education Program, New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

Fond Farewell:

Suzanne Bradley worked for ECELS and edited Health Link for nearly a decade. After she expanded her nursing credentials by becoming an attorney, she continued to work on Health Link as long as she could. Her legal work and other duties no longer leave her enough time to edit Health Link. Thank you to Suzanne Bradley for her dedication to this work over all these years. Beginning with this issue Dr. Arson will write & edit Health Link.

Debbie Ogens has filled orders from child care providers for self-learning modules and print materials for ten years. In February 2003, she moved to a new career. We miss her, and thank her for her hard work over the years. Debbie’s duties have been ably assumed by Sandy Sandos.