October 2013

Backpack safety

School is back in session, and backpacks are once again an integral part of your child's wardrobe. But did you know that when used incorrectly, backpacks can injure your child's muscles and joints, leading to severe pain and posture problems?

Finding the right backpack:
- **Look for two wide, padded shoulder straps.** A single strap does not distribute weight evenly.
- **Opt for a lightweight bag.** A lighter backpack decreases how much your child has to carry.
- **Consider a rolling backpack.** Rolling backpacks are a good choice for students who tote a heavy load, although they still must be carried up stairs and may be difficult to roll in snow.

Tips to prevent injury:
- **Always use both shoulder straps** to distribute weight evenly and decrease muscle strain.
- **Tighten the straps** so the pack is close to the body and two inches above the waist.
- **Pack light.** The backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of your child's total body weight.
- **Organize the backpack to use all of its compartments.** Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back.
- **Use school lockers** to store books between classes.
- **Bend using both knees.** Do not bend over at the waist when wearing or lifting a heavy backpack.
Dangers of distracted driving

Who is at risk?
- Younger, inexperienced drivers under the age of 20 are at the highest risk for distraction-related fatal crashes.
- Nearly half of all U.S. high school students 16 years or older text or email while driving.
- Compared with students who do not text and drive, those who do are also nearly twice as likely to consent to ride with a driver who has been drinking and five times as likely to drink and drive themselves.

The hard facts:
In 2011, 3,331 people in the U.S. were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, compared to 3,267 in 2010. And despite improvements from 2010, 2011 still saw 387,000 people injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver.

Sending or receiving a text takes a driver’s eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, that is equivalent to driving the length of an entire football field blindfolded.

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert the driver’s attention away from the road. All distractions endanger driver, passengers and bystanders. These types of distractions include:
- Texting
- Talking on a cell phone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming (combing hair, checking appearance in the mirror)
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video or adjusting a radio or music player

Because text messaging requires visual, manual and cognitive attention from the driver, it is the most alarming distraction.

Protect yourself and your loved ones:
Before you get behind the steering wheel, take a minute to join The Pledge and learn more about these online initiatives to end distracted driving:
- www.itcanwait.com
- www.distraction.gov

It’s not just distracted driving that’s dangerous: Pedestrian safety for preteens and teens
According to a research study performed by Safe Kids Worldwide, teenagers are at the highest risk for injuries related to distracted walking, a shift since 1995 when 5- to 9-year-olds sustained the most injuries.

The death rate among older teens is now twice that of younger children.

This surge in pedestrian injury affecting teenagers is believed to stem from the use of electronics and hand-held devices while walking, a trend that coincides with the increased availability of mobile technologies beginning in the mid-2000s.

Older kids with smartphones in hand and music in their ears may step into roads without paying attention to the risks around them.

Tips to ensure pedestrian safety:
- Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings; remove ear buds and headphones.
- Remind children of ALL ages the basics:
  - Cross at crosswalks and obey traffic signals.
  - Look both ways and listen before stepping off the curb.
  - Walk – don’t run – while crossing the street.
- Adults should model safe behaviors. Children and teens will mimic what adults do.
Fire Prevention Week 2013
“Prevent Kitchen Fires”

Did you know cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home-fire injuries?

The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.

Top tips:
• Have a “kid-free zone” of at least 3 feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.
• Stay in the kitchen while frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen, always turn off the stove.
• Remain in the home if you are baking or roasting food. Use a timer.
• Keep anything that can catch fire – oven mitts, wooden utensils, towels or curtains – away from your stove top.
• Supervise children when they are using a microwave oven.
• Use only microwave-safe food containers or dishes when microwaving.
• Install smoke alarms outside sleeping areas and on every level of the home, including the basement.
• Plan ahead. Make a fire escape plan with your family. Practice at night and during the day at least twice a year.

Safety tidbit: Halloween safety

Before your little ghosts, superheroes and princesses head out on Halloween, go over these simple precautions to ensure a fun and safe night:

• Select or create a costume that does not obstruct your child’s vision or cause him or her to trip and fall. Be creative with reflective materials.
• Carry flashlights or glow sticks to help children see and be seen by motorists.
• Children under 12 should be accompanied by an adult while trick-or-treating and crossing streets.
• Go in groups and stick with familiar neighborhoods that are welllighted.
• Walk on sidewalks or paths and obey traffic signals.
• Check treats for signs of tampering before children are allowed to eat them. Candy should be thrown away if the wrapper is faded or torn or if the candy is unwrapped.

For more information, contact Safe Kids at 859-323-1153 or visit www.safekidsfayectecounty.com.

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