

# Parent Power

Fall 2009



**"Go outside & play,"** is a familiar phrase to many of us, but the simple truth is that kids today aren't heeding this call. Research shows that children today spend half as much time outside as kids did 20 years ago. In fact, they are spending an average of 6 and a half hours a day "plugged into" electronic media. ~No Child Left Inside: Reversing Our Children's Nature Deficit

If you need information resources or places to go for help, call **Franklin County Information & Referral** 717-261-2561

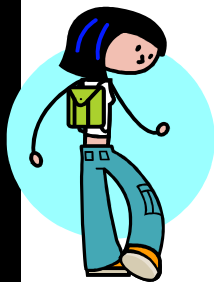
## Correction

The phone number for Healthy Communities Partnership and Staying Tobacco Free recently changed. The number is listed incorrectly in the upcoming *Winter Parent Power*. The correct number is **264.1470**.

## It's our Back To School Issue!

### Backpack Safety

- Pack light – a backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of the student's body weight.
- Organize the pack to make use of all compartments and pack heavier items closest to the center of the back.
- Choose a pack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.

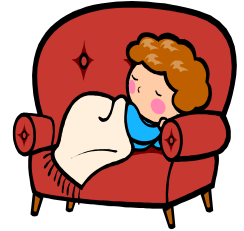


- Always use both shoulder straps. Slinging a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles and may increase curvature of the spine.

For additional information, go to [www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cfocus/cfschool06/focus.htm#backpack](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cfocus/cfschool06/focus.htm#backpack)

### Healthy Sleep

Children's health and behavior take a nose dive when their sleep habits are out of whack. Adequate sleep will boost your child's energy and enthusiasm. Good-quality sleep also can help your child learn more easily and reduce many behavioral problems.



### How Much Is Enough?

Generally, between the ages of 6 and 9, most children need about 10 hours of sleep a night, while preteens need a little over 9 hours. Your child may require more sleep if he or she:

- Has a short attention span, or is irritable or restless
- Has unusually low energy and activity levels
- Is more tearful, anxious, defensive or impatient than usual

### Sleep Tips for Your Children

Set a regular time for bed each night and stick to it

- Avoid feeding children big meals close to bedtime
- Avoid giving anything with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime
- Make after-dinner playtime a relaxing time
- Establish a calming bedtime routine

**Note:** Each child is different and has his or her own way of approaching sleep. Some take extra time to fall asleep, while others wake more often during the night. You know your child's personal habits best, so with a little trial and error, you should succeed in finding a routine that suits your family.



**GREEN HOUR®**  
Helps Parents get  
Their Kids Outside:  
Studies Show Kids

Spend 50% Less Time Outdoors  
Than Their Parents Did

What is Green Hour? Green Hour is a way to get kids and their parents off the couch, out the door and exploring the world around them. This comprehensive online resource for families offers more than just activities, it provides tools for building more fun time in to busy lives. Visit [www.greenhour.org](http://www.greenhour.org), a 2008 iParenting Media Award Winner.



Children in large groups are breeding grounds for the organisms that cause illness. Here is a lineup of the top five infectious illnesses that keep kids home from school and child care.

## Top 5 Causes of Missed School

**Colds** Children typically have six to ten colds a year and also tend to have more severe and longer lasting symptoms than do adults. The good news is that you or your child should be feeling better in about a week. If symptoms aren't improving in that time, see your doctor to make sure your child doesn't have a bacterial infection in the lungs, sinuses or ears.

**Stomach Flu** The second most common childhood illness is gastroenteritis, more commonly known as the stomach flu. This illness can lead to dehydration. Signs and symptoms of dehydration include: excessive thirst, dry mouth, severe weakness or lethargy, nausea or vomiting.



**Ear Infection** Middle ear infections occur most often in babies and children between the ages of 4 months and 5 years. Most children have had at least one ear infection by the time they're 3 years old. It can be difficult to distinguish between ear infections caused by bacteria and those caused by viruses. For most otherwise healthy kids over 6 months of age, watchful waiting is a reasonable choice for suspected ear infections. They often clear up without antibiotics. But this may not be the best option for every child. If your child has recurrent ear infections, hearing loss or other health conditions, your doctor may suggest antibiotics or ear tubes.

**Pink Eye** Also known as conjunctivitis, it is an inflammation of the clear membrane that covers the white part of the eye and lines the inner surface of the eyelids. When caused by viruses or bacteria, it is highly contagious. Warm or cool compresses may ease your child's discomfort. Signs and symptoms of pink eye include: redness and or itchiness in one or both eyes, blurred vision and sensitivity to light, and tearing.



**Sore Throat** Dry scratchiness and painful swallowing are the hallmarks of a sore throat but it is most often a symptom of another illness - usually a viral infection such as a cold or the flu. Most sore throats usually go away on their own in a few days. Only a small portion of sore throats are the result of strep. Strep throat is most common in children between the ages of 5 and 15, but can affect people of all ages. Fevers above 101°F are common in strep throat, and swallowing can be so painful that your child may have difficulty eating. Antibiotics are required to combat strep throat.



**Note:** The single most important thing your child can do to prevent illness is to wash his or her hands thoroughly and frequently. Despite your best efforts, your child is going to get sick - especially during his or her first few years of contact with larger groups of children. But a child's immunity improves with time. School-age children gradually become less prone to common illnesses and recover more quickly from the diseases they do catch. For more information: [www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cfocus/cfschool06/focus.htm#top5](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cfocus/cfschool06/focus.htm#top5)





# ACHOO!

**Flu Season is Almost Here  
Are Your Kids Covered?**

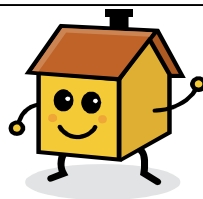
**Reliable Health Insurance Is Invaluable Whether Kids are Healthy or Sick**

When the cooler weather arrives, cold and flu season is just around the corner. As you stock your medicine cabinet with all the essentials, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) wants to remind you that health insurance for your children is essential at this time of year - and always.

**CHIP enrollment information is available online: [www.chipcoverspakids.com](http://www.chipcoverspakids.com)  
by phone: 1- 800-986-KIDS**  
*(go to page4 for more CHIP information)*

Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program  
**We Cover All Kids.**  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,  
Edward G. Rendell, Governor

## Creating a Reader-friendly Home

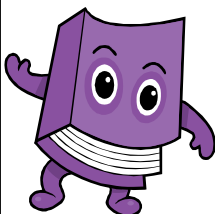


A home filled with reading material is a good way to help kids become enthusiastic (and proficient) readers. What kind of books should you have? Ask your kids about their interests. If they're too young to have a preference, your local librarian can offer suggestions about age-appropriate books.

Here are some other tips:

**Keep a varied selection.** Collect board books or books with mirrors and different textures for babies. Older kids will enjoy variety: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry plus dictionaries and other reference books.

Kids can understand stories they might not be able to read on their own. If a more challenging book interests your child, make it something to read together. Younger kids can look at illustrations in books and ask questions as they follow along. And don't limit reading material to books.



Kids might also enjoy:

magazines (for kids)	audio books
newspapers	postcards from relatives
comic books	photo albums or scrapbooks
the internet	

**Keep reading material handy.** Keep sturdy books with other toys for easy exploration. Books near the changing table and high chair can be helpful distractions for younger kids at appropriate moments. Plastic books can even go in the bathtub. Keep books next to comfy chairs and sofas where you cuddle up so you can read after feedings and naps.

**Create a special reading place.** As kids grow, keep age-appropriate books and magazines on shelves they can reach in their favorite hangouts around the house. Make these shelves appealing and keep them organized. Place some of the books with the covers facing out so they're easy to spot. Put a basket full of books and magazines next to their favorite places to sit. Create a cozy reading corner, and encourage kids to use it by setting up "reading corner time" each day.

**Keep it appealing.** Make sure reading areas have good lighting. Change the materials often. Add seasonal books, rotate different magazines, and include books that relate to what kids are interested in or studying in school. Decorate the corner with your child's artwork or writing. Place a CD or tape player nearby for audio books.

**Encourage kids to create the reading.** Set up a writing and art center and encourage kids to make books, posters, or collages that they decorate with their own pictures and writing. Kids love to read things they've written themselves or to share their creations with family and friends.



## Think About Atmosphere

Other ways to encourage kids to read:

- Give your child quiet time every day to read or write.
- Limit time kids spend in front of a screen (including TV, computer, and video games) to help ensure that they have time for reading.
- Read together. Offer to read a book aloud, or ask your child to read to you from a favorite magazine. Make a habit of sitting together while you each read your own books, sharing quiet time together.

From **Kids Health**: [www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive/all\\_reading/reading\\_home.html#](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive/all_reading/reading_home.html#)

## On the Go with Kids?

When ordering a kids meal, substitute fruit for the fries.

Have your kids help you make a large batch of trail mix at home using seeds, nuts, and dried fruit. Store trail mix in small bags so they are ready to go at a moments notice.

Ants on a Log: spread peanut butter on a piece of celery. Add raisins as ants and you have a fun, healthy treat.

Visit  
[fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov)  
for more great tips and recipes.

## Grab & Go!

**Stock your pantry, desk or refrigerator with items that can easily be taken with you.**

**When you are in a hurry, you will have many delicious & nutritious snacks to choose from.**

**Some great options include:**

- 100% juice boxes
- Dried fruit, such as raisins, apples, dates
- Fresh whole fruit
- Green salads-prepackaged (keep in a cool container on the road)
- Baked veggie chips
- Fruit in packaged individual serving containers packed with water or fruit juice
- Buy whole fruits & veggies & cut them up at home for an easy & cheaper alternative to pre-cut fruits at the store. (keep in a cool container on the road)
- No-added sugar applesauce in individual serving containers.



Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program  
**We Cover All Kids.**

CHIP now covers all uninsured kids and teens (up to age 19), and no family

makes too much money for CHIP. Coverage includes doctor visits, dental care, eye care, prescriptions, immunizations, mental health and much more.

There are more than 133,000 uninsured children in Pennsylvania who now have access to this comprehensive health insurance coverage. All families need to do is apply!

For many families, CHIP is free, with no copays or monthly premiums. Families with higher incomes may qualify for low-cost or at-cost CHIP, which still includes the same comprehensive benefits. Families whose incomes fall below CHIP guidelines may be enrolled in Medical Assistance.

Families who need health insurance are encouraged to apply right away. CHIP enrollment information is available by visiting [chipcoverspakids.com](http://chipcoverspakids.com) or calling **800-986-KIDS** to apply or for more information.

Although having access to proper medical treatment is invaluable, you can do many things at home to help your family prevent illness.

Here are some simple tips to keep you and your family healthy during cold and flu season:

- Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Stay home when you are sick. If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Cover your mouth and nose. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Clean your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

### Fastest Veggie Dip Around

- ~1 cup plain non-fat yogurt
- ~Dry ranch dressing mix or other dry herbs such as basil or garlic
- ~Your favorite vegetables such as carrot sticks, broccoli, bell peppers, cauliflower, or celery.



Season yogurt with the dressing mix or dry herbs. Add just enough for it to taste great!



“Touching and even playing with books is an important way to encourage your child’s relationship with them.

Keep expensive, keepsake or fragile books up on higher shelves to take down and read with your child. And expect that the rest will get sticky, dirty and dog-eared—in other words, well-loved!”



### Staying Tobacco Free

Staying Tobacco Free is a program of Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) of Greater Franklin County.

The program offers free information, resources and support to anyone who wants to quit smoking. Leaving nicotine behind is difficult for many, and those who quit successfully often make several attempts. **Staying Tobacco Free** wants to remind everyone, that while quitting may be difficult, help is available. Classes are available in Chambersburg and Waynesboro.

**To learn more call 264.1470 or visit HCP’s website: [www.hcpfranklinpa.org](http://www.hcpfranklinpa.org)**

Information on quitting is available by clicking on the **Programs and Services** tab; class and support group schedules can be found on the **Calendar and Events** tab of the site. Click on the item for more details.

### Hey Parents! Check out these websites:

[www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)

National Wildlife Federation

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

homework help and how the body works

[www.bam.gov](http://www.bam.gov)

Center for Disease Control’s site for kids

**Funding for this issue of *Parent Power* was provided by the Target Foundation through the local Chambersburg Target.**

*Parent Power* is a publication to empower parents brought to you by the Parenting Programs Coalition of Franklin County.

Ten thousand issues in English and Spanish are distributed throughout Franklin County to all 7 school districts, Head Start, libraries, medical offices, human service agencies, etc. Issues are also available online at [www.co.franklin.pa.us](http://www.co.franklin.pa.us)

This issue was prepared by Kim Lucas, through HSDf funding,

To contribute information for the next issue or for more information, call 261-3144.