Traveling Safely with Infants and Children

The number of children who travel or live outside their home countries has increased dramatically. An estimated 1.9 million children travel overseas each year. Health issues related to pediatric international travel are complex, reflecting varied activities, exposures, and age-specific health risks. While some travel health concerns are similar for children and adults, international pediatric travelers have unique problems because of variable immunity and different age-related behavior; for example, a newly mobile toddler will have different health risks than a sexually active adolescent. Furthermore, many travel-related vaccinations and preventive medications used for adults are not licensed or recommended for pediatric use.

Clinicians should obtain a complete assessment of travel-related activities and provide preventive counseling and interventions tailored to specific risks. Adults traveling with young children should be counseled to monitor the children carefully for signs of illness. Irritability may be a response to changes in time zone and environment but may also indicate illness in young children. Excessive or persistent irritability, fevers, or signs of dehydration should be evaluated promptly. Children with chronic diseases or immunocompromising conditions require travel preparations and treatment tailored to their specific underlying condition.

Diarrhea and Dehydration  Diarrhea and associated gastrointestinal illness are among the most common travel-related problems affecting children. Young children and infants are at high risk for diarrhea and other food and waterborne illnesses because of limited pre-existing immunity and behavioral factors such as frequent hand-to-mouth contact. Infants and children with diarrhea can become dehydrated more quickly than adults.

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Travelers should ensure that dairy products are pasteurized. Fresh fruits and vegetables must be adequately cooked or washed well and peeled without recontamination. Bringing finger foods or snacks (self-prepared or from home) will reduce the temptation to try potentially risky foods between meals. Meats and fish should be well cooked and eaten just after they have been prepared. Travelers should avoid food from street vendors.

Assessment and Treatment of Dehydration - The greatest risk to the infant with diarrhea and vomiting is dehydration. Fever or increased ambient temperature increases fluid losses and speeds dehydration. Parents should be advised that dehydration is best prevented and treated by use of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), in addition to the infant's usual food. Rice and other cereal-based ORS, in which complex carbohydrates are substituted for glucose, are also available and may be more acceptable to young children. Adults traveling with children should be aware that sports drinks, which are designed to replace water and electrolytes lost through sweat, do not contain the same proportions of electrolytes as the solution recommended by World Health Organization (WHO) for rehydration during cases of diarrhea. ORS packets are available at stores or pharmacies in almost all developing countries.

Source: Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Building Strong Families

Secrets of Parenting

Adult stress can build up and spill over to affect your children. It’s up to you, as a parent, to recognize stress and confront the challenges it presents without taking out your frustrations on your children. By doing this, you can reduce the negative impact on your family.

These guidelines can help you confront stress:

Recognize the effects of stress in your children. Although some stress is normal and even healthy, children today seem to encounter many stressful life events at earlier ages. Stress shows itself in children through complaints about stomachaches, being nervous, trouble sleeping, flare-ups of anger, and infections.

Model and teach coping skills to your children. Children learn to cope by watching you cope. Learn a coping skill yourself, and be sure you model it for your children. Some positive ways to cope include exercise; calming techniques, such as sitting quietly while you take deep breaths; writing about your frustrations in a journal; and listening to music. Seek help from friends and family when you are in stressful situations, and teach your children to think through alternative ways to solve problems.

Take a break, and return refreshed. When you have had a stressful day, tell your children about your day and explain why you need a 10-minute break. Be sure they are supervised while you take time for yourself. Then take a 10-minute nap or sit quietly to let your heart rate slow down and your thoughts become calm. Then, you will be able to calmly address issues with your children. The problem will still be there, but the spillover might not affect your interactions with your child.

Apologize. Apologize if you express anger at the children when your stress comes from something else. This provides a good example for them so they can learn to apologize, too.

Help children make sense of the world. Children and teenagers need to feel rooted in a world that makes sense to them. It makes sense to follow rules if you understand their purpose. Be an anchor in your children's lives. They need someone they can count on. Explain why stressful things happen in simple terms.
Find help. Look at your support system. Do you have friends you can count on or family members who will help? Are there special services within the community that provide help to families under stress? Reach out to friends and family, and ask for help.

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service provides a free publication that provides more information about stress and parenting. It is available from your county Extension Center, or it can be viewed online by visiting the website: www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/humandev/pubs/copestress.html

Source: North Carolina Cooperative Extension

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Promoting Safe and Healthy Environments

Make Your Mattress Last

Protect It
A mattress pad or cover is a must for keeping your mattress stain- and odor-free. A hypoallergenic cover will help prevent the build-up of dust mites and other organisms in the mattress. Because accidents happen, choose a waterproof pad or cover for the children's room. It's not against the law, but you still shouldn't remove the tag after you purchase the mattress. It has information that you might eventually need for the warranty.

Flip It
Rotate your mattress regularly to prevent leaving body impressions. Recommendations vary, so check with the manufacturer for specific instructions. In general, you should turn and flip a mattress weekly for the first three months. After that, turn it every two or three months. Rotate the box spring head to toe twice a year.

Clean It
Vacuuming is the most recommended method for cleaning your mattress. Try to do this once a month. Wash your bed linens weekly in hot water, if possible, for best results. If you must tackle a stain, use a cleaner made for mattresses.

Helpful Hints: Don't neglect your bed. With the proper care, your mattress can live a long life. Wash the cover weekly for best results.

1. Hypoallergenic and waterproof covers will protect your mattress and increase its life.
2. When stain removal is necessary, use a cleaner specifically made for mattresses. This will prevent fading or staining. Do not ever use dry-cleaning fluids. The chemicals can damage the mattress and cause it to hold odors.

Source: Southern Living, April, 2006 issue

SUVs: Buckle Up!

Sports utility vehicles weigh an average of 1,317 pounds more than passenger cars. But when it comes to safety, bigger isn't always better, according to a study in Pediatrics. SUVs are twice as likely to roll over in a crash than cars, the study found, and unrestrained children in rollover crashes are more likely to be injured than those properly buckled in, says Dennis R. Durbin, M.D., one of the study's authors. Always buckle up your child in the back seat in a car seat that's appropriate for his/her size and weight-no matter what vehicle you drive. For more information, check out chop.edu/carseat.
Keep Medicine Farther out of Reach

Nearly all medicines carry the warning “Keep out of reach of children.” But do we heed it? Not often enough, according to a recent report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It found that more than 53,500 kids ages 4 and younger, were treated in emergency rooms between 2001 and 2003 for accidentally swallowing medications and vitamins not intended for them. To keep your kids safe:

► Store all medicines and vitamins, including those with child-resistant caps, in secure cabinets out of children's reach.
► Whenever possible, keep medications in their original containers. If you transfer them to pillboxes or other containers, make sure kids can't get to them.
► Discard all unused medicines by flushing them down the toilet.
► Don't take medicine in front of kids.
► Avoid calling medicines candy. It can make them exciting to kids.
► Make sure visitors don't leave medicine where kids can find them, such as in an unattended purse.

Source: CDC’s MMWR Report and Dan Schnitzel, M.D., CDC medical officer

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