

MEDICAL
BRIEFS

Grief recovery

Hospice of Washtenaw will begin its next five-week grief recovery series 7-8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 1, at the hospice office, 806 Airport Blvd. (off State Street), Ann Arbor.

The series is dedicated to helping survivors adapt to the loss of a loved one and gain new coping skills. Goals include understanding how grief affects you emotionally, spiritually and physically; dealing with anger, guilt and loneliness; and taking care of yourself.

Participants are encouraged to attend all five sessions. Pre-registration is required. There is no charge for the series. For more information, call Dwight Forshee, (734) 327-3409.

Alternative medicine

Doctors Paul Dugless and Clinton Greenstone, board-certified internal medicine physicians, with Oakwood will hold complementary and alternative medicine open house 5-8 p.m. Thursday, June 8, at Oakwood Healthcare Center-North, Westland, 36555 Warren Road, Westland.

Learn more about alternative health care, including traditional Chinese medicine, ayurveda from India, and anthroposophical medicine from Europe. Meet the physicians and staff. Enjoy free refreshments. For more information, call (734) 414-9003.

Arthritis help

Providence Hospital and Medical Centers will present a lecture on arthritis 7-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 23, at Providence Medical Center-Providence Park, 47601 Grand River Ave., Novi. The program will focus on treatment options, pain management, current arthritis medicine and hip and knee replacement.

The presenter is Dr. Michael Haynes, an orthopedic surgeon on staff at Providence Hospital. To register, call Providence Community Health toll-free (877) 345-5500.

Cancer Survivors' Day

The University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center will host its sixth annual cancer survivor's day celebration, "Swinging Toward the Cure," 1-3 p.m. Sunday, June 4, at the Morris Lawrence Building, Washtenaw Community College, 4600 East Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor.

Cancer survivors from communities throughout Michigan will gather with family, friends and health care providers to celebrate life. Entertainment includes swing dancing, big band music and a sing-along with the Gilda's Club choir. There will be round-table discussions, displays and door prizes. The event is free and open to the public. Registration and additional information is available by calling (800) 742-2300, category No. 6276.

Nursing Career Fair

Nursing Excellence magazine will host a career fair for all registered nurses 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Novi Expo Center, 43700 Expo Center Drive, Exhibit Hall A, Novi. Recruiters from health care facilities throughout the state, as well as the nation, will offer information and conduct on-site interviews. Take several copies of your resume. Registration suggested, but walk-ins are welcome. Call (517) 837-9581 for information.

We want your health news

There are several ways you can reach The Observer Health & Fitness Staff. The Sunday section provides numerous avenues for you to offer news, information including Medical Desk (reporting on medical events), Medical Newsletters (reporting on medical news to the medical community), Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies).

We also welcome newsworthy ideas for health and fitness related stories. The editors are there to help you decide if you can call, write, fax or e-mail us.

CALL US: (734) 636-2222

OR WRITE US: 10000 Washtenaw Ave., Suite 100, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

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Encourage Bicycle Safety...

Bicycling is fun and safe when you are wearing correctly fitting safety gear

BY NANCY DEUTSCH
SPECIAL WRITER

Last summer, a Michigan firefighter went cycling with his kids. He hit a rock, fell off his bicycle, and hit his head on the curb. As a result, he suffered a cranial hemorrhage and eventually died.

He had made a fatal error, said Dr. Sanford Viedor, attending emergency physician at Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills. At work, the firefighter wore all the necessary protective gear. But not at play. He was not wearing a bicycle helmet at the time of the accident.

Bicycle helmets are not mandatory in Michigan, but parents should make them mandatory for their kids and themselves. "It's a parental issue more than anything else," Viedor stressed.

Parents need to encourage their child to wear a helmet from a young age so they always wear one, rather than insisting on one when the child reaches adolescence and "they don't perceive it as a cool thing to do," said Viedor.

The problem with getting teenagers to wear a helmet is that too many of their friends don't, and they don't want to seem different or get laughed at, Viedor said. Teenagers also "think they are invincible."

Injuries

No one is invincible when it comes to injuries suffered in biking accidents, and the statistics will bear that out.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, bike-related crashes kill 800 people every year and send about 567,000 to hospital emergency rooms with injuries. They suggest that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent.

Children are more susceptible to suffering head injuries from biking than adults because their heads are larger in proportion to their bodies, and they may not have mastered the reflexes needed to save themselves when they fall, Viedor said. Adults put out their hands when they anticipate a fall, but a child may not do that.

In addition to head injuries, bicycle riders can



Correct: 2 finger widths

above eyebrows

Too low on head

Too high on head



Picture courtesy of AAA

come to other harm from riding a bicycle that is not in top condition or by riding unsafely.

Dr. Ed Wojtyla is an orthopedist in sports medicine at U-M Health Systems in Ann Arbor. He sees numerous bicycle injuries that run the gamut from fractured legs, feet and shoulders to being knocked unconscious.

Many people ride their bikes on rough terrain not meant for bicycles and at speeds that are unsafe, he said. It's important for parents to know where their kids are riding. "Riding through a wooded area can be quite dangerous."

Accidents can happen around the home, said Lynn Bunce, a Canton mother of two. When her eldest son, Jack, 3, goes on his bike, he always wears a helmet and Bunce is always out there with him. She worries that he'll take off or go into the street if she lets him outside alone even for a minute. She has made it a point "not to do anything when he's on his bike."

Precautions

All people cycling should wear reflective clothing at night. In Michigan it is mandatory to have a light on the bike when riding at night. It's also important to keep the bike in good form.

However, many people ride bicycles that are not in good condition, said Andy Wrenbeck, manager of Planet Cycle in Canton. Cyclists will come in upset their shifts aren't working properly even when their brakes don't work at all, he said. When he points it out, some people will shrug it off and say it's not the brakes they're worried about.

Despite what people think, many bicycle accidents happen close to home, when a car backs up in the driveway or street and the driver doesn't notice a child playing on his or her bike behind the car, Wrenbeck said.

Valerie Neidert, who lives in Canton with her two children, ages 7 and 3, never lets them on their bikes if she or her husband uses the car. "If I ever move the car, I have them stand on the steps in front of the house," she said. Neidert keeps her children clearly in view.

On a positive note, Wrenbeck has seen an increase in sales of bicycle helmets in recent years. Planet Cycle sells 7,000 to 8,000 helmets every year, about half to adults and half to kids. While many people don't wear a helmet, that's still an improvement over a few years ago, he said.

Helmets retail from \$30 to \$130, and while there is little difference in safety, the more expensive helmets last longer, Wrenbeck said.

Police efforts

Officer Randy Rankin of the Canton police department said it might help to get children to wear their helmets if par-

ents allow them "to personalize their helmets." He encourages letting children place stickers or paint their helmets to make them into a model they like.

Rankin has been visiting schools in Canton for two years, talking about road rules and bike safety to youngsters. He brings along a helmet on his talks, and a lightbulb. As part of his demonstration, Rankin puts the light bulb into a plastic bag and tapes it inside the helmet. He then drops the helmet and removes the intact light bulb to demonstrate how a helmet can protect a person's head.

Wearing helmets is very important, he said. "A child could fall down in their driveway and be hurt if not wearing a helmet."

Last year, the Canton police worked with McDonald's to improve helmet wearing. Police would stop youngsters found cycling with a helmet on and give them a free coupon for McDonald's ice cream.

Rankin agreed it is up to parents to push their children to wear the protective headgear. Unfortunately, "a lot of parents don't feel there is a need for it," he said.

Sixteen states now have laws requiring children to wear helmets when cycling. In Florida, those who don't comply have to pay a \$17 fine when caught not wearing them.

First-graders respond

First-grade children at Isabister Elementary School in Plymouth were recently given this information, and a scenario of a little boy who had a serious accident but was not harmed because he was wearing a helmet. They were asked to come up with a position statement for or against the mandate to wear helmets.

The topic of bicycle helmets was chosen because "we thought it was something the kids would be interested in," said Sarah Smith, social studies chairwoman for the school improvement committee.

The kids had a lot of interesting things to say about helmets, including wondering why some states would mandate children but not adults to wear helmets. They didn't understand why their own parents would make rules that did not apply to themselves.

Some of the kids responded, "I wear a helmet but my Dad doesn't," Smith said.

Aileen Wise, a first-grade teacher at Isabister, sees many more children wearing helmets now than just a few years ago. But even one child without one is one too many.

She remembers an incident that happened about six years ago. A first-grader went bicycle riding with his parents. They were crossing Ann Arbor Road when a car broadsided the youngster. He was not wearing a helmet and suffered a head injury.

It's important to talk about helmet-use with children, she said. Bicycle helmets are "a good topic for debate."

Bike and bike helmet safety tips

1. Always wear an approved bicycle safety helmet and helmet; wear bright colored clothes so drivers can see you.
2. Know and obey traffic signs, signals and pavement markings.
3. Stop at all intersections and walk bike across busy streets.
4. On streets where cars are parked, watch for car doors opening into the roadway.
5. When driving with a group, stay in a single line, one bike length apart on the right side of the roadway.
6. Do not dart out into a road from a driveway or from between parked cars. Stop and look for traffic.
7. Be extra careful turning left. Vehicles approaching or following may not see you.
8. Use bike paths and lightly traveled streets whenever possible.
9. Yield the right of way to pedestrians.
10. Keep your bicycle in good repair. Check and adjust loose parts and tire pressure weekly. Clean and lightly oil moving parts regularly. Store your bike indoors if at all possible.

Source: AAA Michigan

Bike helmets:

- a. A bicycle helmet should fit snugly with all straps tight.
- b. Look for the chin strap to be comfortable.
- c. Use fit pads (they come supplied with new helmets) to provide firm, yet comfortable pressure all around the head.
- d. Replace the helmet every three years to accommodate head growth in children and avoid any deterioration.

Source: Delta, a major manufacturer of bicycle helmets



RIGHT TURN



LEFT TURN



STOP

Use your "head" to avoid serious sports injury

With the summer sports season ready to begin, a University of Michigan expert is warning athletes of all kinds - students, amateurs and professionals alike - to heed new findings about an old sports injury: concussion.

Even a little hit on the head, whether in a Little League baseball game or a pick-up round of basketball, can mean big problems, says Dr. Edward Wojtyla, the U-M sports medicine specialist who recently led a national committee on concussion treatment guidelines.

Sports-related concussions are far more common - and potentially more dangerous - than most people realize, Wojtyla said. New research shows that a single brain-bruising knock can

cause damage, and that repeated concussions may cause permanent brain injury.

"The number of concussions that cause truly critical injuries are few and far between, but every year in North America, several kids lose their lives to undiagnosed concussions," he said. "Most concussions are minor, causing short-lived symptoms that clear up pretty quickly."

However, only proper screening on the sidelines and treatment by trained professionals can help decide when, or if, an athlete can return to the game.

When an athlete has had a concussion, the risks from additional ones increase. "The real danger with some minor concussions is that they can

make the brain and nervous system susceptible to another blow. If it comes along, that can cause the nervous system to deteriorate rapidly. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's truly an emergency."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 600 deaths annually result from sports-related head trauma; most of these occur among 16 to 24 year olds. Although concussions are associated mostly with contact sports such as football, baseball, soccer and hockey, Wojtyla cautions that even non-contact sports carry a risk of concussion.

Once a concussion has occurred, the risk of another one increases. "The real danger with some minor concussions is that they can

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