

Sunday, April 7, 2002



DAVID CARPENTER

## On break? Withstand pressure from peers

**S**pring break is an exciting time of year for many teens. Some seniors view it as a rite of passage — a milestone to be celebrated with friends before graduation. For younger high school students, it may provide an opportunity to sample, for the first time, a taste of freedom away from the watchful eye of parents.

Along with spring break comes a lot of temptations and peer pressure. What can parents do to temper their teen's excitement and wild partying that can prove to be very dangerous?

No matter where they go — Fort Lauderdale, Myrtle Beach, Cancun, or on a cruise — teens will be interacting with others who use alcohol and drugs. Parents can try to anticipate all the possible dangers and warn their sons and daughters, but it's impossible to anticipate every situation they may encounter.

**■ Spring break is the worst possible situation for a teen to begin to learn how to make his or her own decisions. Empower them to make decisions for themselves, and reinforce the good decisions they make. Not only will this help them make better decisions on spring break, but also it will help them make better decisions every day for the rest of their lives.**

Teens often feel they have to go along with the crowd because they don't feel confident enough to say "no." Parents should lay a foundation to help teens respect themselves and feel confident enough to stand up for what they believe. Everyday, let them know how much you love and care for them. Praise good work. Encourage them to respect themselves and others not just through words, but by setting a good example.

Spring break is the worst possible situation for a teen to begin to learn how to make his or her own decisions. Empower them to make decisions for themselves, and reinforce the good decisions they make. Not only will this help them make better

Please see CARPENTER, C7

### We want your health news

There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous venues for you to offer noteworthy information including Medical Databook (upcoming calendar events), Medical Newsmakers (upcoming interviews with medical professionals), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies). We also welcome noteworthy ideas for health and fitness related stories.

To submit an item to our newspaper you can call, write, fax or e-mail us.

**■ CALL US:**  
(734) 953-2128

**■ WRITE US:**  
Observer & Eccentric Newspapers  
(Specify Databook, Newsmakers or Briefs)  
Attn: Renee Skaglund  
26251 Schoolcraft Road  
Livonia, MI 48150

**■ FAX US:**  
(734) 953-7277

**■ E-MAIL US:**  
rskaglund@oc.homecomm.net

# PLAY IT SAFE



# ON SPRING BREAK

BY CAROL MARSHALL  
SPECIAL WRITER

Some call spring break a rite of passage. To others it's a week of partying in the sun. Over the next few weeks high school and college students will depart to and return from sunny vacation destinations. With a little luck and a lot of wisdom, they'll return with their health, wallets and self-respect intact.

Although spring break travels can produce fun-filled memories and adventures, young adults and teens can also face risk while they're miles away from home and dorm. Among the dangers are crime, infectious diseases, alcohol-related illness and accidents, and car crashes.

### Family decision

Often spring break is the first time young adults leave home unsupervised, and it has become a rite of passage for many teens, according to Beth Frydlewicz, program manager for Beaumont Hospital's parenting program. Frydlewicz will accompany her niece and five other teenagers on a spring break trip to Cancun this month.

"It really is a family decision whether or not to let your child go on spring break," she said. "It depends on the teenager and the circumstances. It's a very difficult decision to make. And if your child is going to go, you really need to know your travel agent, who can help you discuss frankly what can happen if your kids get into trouble while they're away, especially if they are traveling out of the country."

It comes come down to a level of respect and trust, Frydlewicz said. "This is an opportunity for parents to show their children that they really trust them. And the child must understand wherever they are, they are representing their family, their school, even their country."

It's important to discuss the laws of the country to which the students are traveling, and the consequences for breaking the law, she stressed. The students must also understand bar etiquette and culture before leaving.

"The kids have to understand never to leave their drink unattended because of the date rape drugs. It's a very dangerous game some people play out there and your teenagers have to know the rules of survival," she said. "You also have to really trust the friends you travel with and know to look out for each other."

Before spring break travelers leave home, it's a good idea to establish a contact at the hotel or resort where they will be staying.

"A staff member or manager can direct your kids to reputable businesses, like where to go on tours or for activities. The staff member will also know how to get in touch with police or other agencies if your child runs into trouble," Frydlewicz said.

The travel agent can tell the teens before they leave about phone cards and whether or not the resort or hotel has Internet access so parents and students can establish a schedule for contacting each other during break, she added.

### Risks on the road

"Automobile accidents are probably the biggest risks for travelers of any kind," said Janet Moody, Botsford infection control nurse. "Another of the biggest risks is accidental injury like sport water craft accidents or injury from sporting activities. They often put themselves in unfamiliar surroundings, participate in new activities, and may be drinking, which can all add to the risk of an accident."

Adding to the risk for accidental injury is sleep deprivation, according to Timothy Roehrs, Henry Ford Health Systems Sleep Disorders and Research Center director of research.

"The issue is primarily driving, especially on a long, monotonous drive. When you're sleep deprived it's possible for you to drive off the roadway," he said. "This can even happen before you've been on break and partying for a few days because a lot of kids will start out short on sleep because they've been staying up late to prepare for their trip. Because they're starting out sleep-deprived, they can run into trouble, especially on rural, unfamiliar roadways."

An even bigger problem is the return trip, when sleep deprivation combined with the effects of drinking for days can lead to deadly consequences.

"When you combine sleepiness and alcohol, you're making a very potent cocktail," he said. Roehrs found in a study at the Center alcohol's functional impact was doubled or tripled when subjects had only four hours of sleep.

Even if the spring break traveler does not drink alcohol, sleep deprivation alone is enough to impair judgment.

"We suspect those people who are risk takers become greater risk takers when they are sleep deprived. People will potentially do crazy things are not judging risks associated with what they're doing," Roehrs said.

### Health risks

Accidents aren't the only dangers associated with spring break travels. Students also risk contracting illness while on vacation.

Among the top risks for vacation-related diseases are skin infections and sexually-transmitted diseases, said Moody.

"Often they're at risk for developing a sexually-transmitted disease because of their behaviors. They may be using drugs or alcohol, and might not yet know their limits or how they will be affected, and they don't use their best judgment," Moody said. Parents who have waited to discuss sex and its consequences until their children reach their teens may have little impact in preparing their students to go on spring break.

"Really, if you've been discussing these issues all along, your kids will be more likely to make the right choices and protect themselves or abstain from sex while they're away from home."

Besides protecting themselves from STDs, travelers should also protect themselves from skin infections by exercising caution in pools and hot tubs, Moody said.

Please see SAFE, C7

## Personal safety is first priority

Debra Phillips, safety coordinator, Saint Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, offers additional tips for keeping spring break safe:

- Let family know who your traveling companions are.
- Inform family members of your route; check in with them along the way; call them when you arrive.
- Visit only well-lit areas and never go alone. Come up with key words or code names to signal to your friends that something isn't right.
- Guard your car keys.
- If faced with a robbery, give in. "A robber doesn't want conflicts, and if you give them conflict, they'll fight it."
- Don't carry a lot of credit cards. Also, emergency phone cards are a must; your cell phone may be out of area.
- Trust your instincts when it comes to sexual situations. If you have the "gut instinct" that something is wrong, just leave. You don't owe anyone an explanation.
- Make sure you always carry I.D. You don't want to be found unconscious without any I.D.
- Be careful about giving out personal information or bringing someone back to your hotel room.

children reach their teens may have little impact in preparing their students to go on spring break.

## Lithotripsy treatment available at St. Mary Mercy

Each year, more than 600,000 Americans develop a kidney stone, causing pain, infection and bleeding. Though many stones pass by themselves, more than 100,000 require medical intervention. In the past, kidney stones often required surgery and a lengthy recuperation period.

Now doctors have a new procedure, lithotripsy, which is performed on an outpatient basis.

Lithotripsy is the use of high-energy shock waves to fragment and disintegrate kidney stones. The shock wave, created by using a high-voltage spark or an electromagnetic impulse, is focused on the stone. This shock wave shatters the stone and allows the fragments — called "gravel" — to pass through the urinary system.

Since the shock wave is generated outside the body, the procedure is termed extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy, or ESWL.

**■ Lithotripsy is the use of high-energy shock waves to fragment and disintegrate kidney stones. This shock wave shatters the stone and allows the fragments — called "gravel" — to pass through the urinary system.**

Lithotripsy is now available at St. Mary Mercy Hospital thanks to a mobile lithotripsy unit that comes to the hospital for four hours, twice a month.

"In the past, patients were limited on where they could go to have this procedure performed," said urologist Dr. Ali Rahmani.

Please see TREATMENT, C7



**Zapping the stone:** St. Mary Mercy urologist Dr. John Harb (second from left) and his team focus high-energy shock waves, a procedure known as "lithotripsy," to shatter a patient's kidney stone.