

MEDICAL BRIEFS

Older drivers

St. Mary Mercy Hospital, Livonia, and the American Association of Retired Persons will offer a two-day program, "55 Alive Driver Safety Program," 5:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 30, and Wednesday, July 31, in Classroom 2. Attendance at both sessions is required.

The AARP 55 ALIVE Driver Safety Program is the nation's first and largest classroom driver-improvement course specially designed for motorists age 50 and older. The course helps drivers refine existing skills and develop safe, defensive driving techniques.

AARP members and non-members alike may take the course. There are no tests. Upon successfully completing the course, graduates may be eligible to receive a state-mandated multi-year discount on their auto insurance premiums.

The fee is \$10. Checks are payable to AARP. To register, please contact St. Mary Mercy's Community Outreach department at (734) 655-8940 or (800) 494-1659 (out-of-state callers only). For directions or additional information please visit our Web site www.stmarymercy.org.

Red Cross safety kit

The Southeastern Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross offers a free kit to libraries, churches, schools and other community facilities that contains information on setting up a Red Cross summer safety bulletin board: photos, safety tips on tornadoes, violent weather, coping with hot weather and water safety. To order "Bulletin Board in a Bag," call (313) 494-2740.

Eating disorders

Participants are needed for a research study that includes a 20-week treatment program to examine the effectiveness of a new type of counseling to reduce eating disorder symptoms and improve health and well-being. The study is conducted by the Women's Mental Health Project at the University of Michigan School of Nursing.

Psychotherapy and nutritional counseling and related medical monitoring are offered at no cost with a \$200 compensation upon completion of the study. You may be eligible if you are a woman between ages 18-35 and currently experience any of the following symptoms:

- Binge eating
 - Vomiting or using laxatives or water pills to get rid of food eaten or to control weight
 - Exercising several times a week to control your weight
 - Fasting
 - Underweight because of dieting
 - Missing your menstrual periods
- For more information, call (800) 742-2300 ext. 2200 or e-mail: cortc@umich.edu.

Senior Information

The new statewide Senior HelpCard produced by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network provides important telephone numbers that connect seniors with free and low-cost services in counties across the state.

The HelpCards will assist seniors in finding agencies that deal with various issues, including abuse and neglect, employment, volunteering, expenses, food, health care, housing, legal, tax assistance and transportation. The cards are available from the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, The American Association of Retired Persons and other prevalent senior-related agencies.

More information about the Senior HelpCard can be found at www.bcbm/helpcard or by calling (800) 733-BLUE (2538).

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 newsworthy information including Medical Briefs (upcoming calendar events), Medical Newsletters (appointments/new hires in the medical field), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies). We also welcome newsworthy 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:**
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■ **WRITE US:**
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Keep kids safe this Summer

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Keeping kids safe this summer is mostly about common sense and parental supervision, says Dr. Frank McGeorge of Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. As associate program director of the hospital's emergency medicine, he has seen his share of children's summertime injuries, especially of the orthopedic variety.

"It really all boils down to supervision. If you pay attention to your kids and train your kids in safe behavior, they will hopefully behave appropriately," he said.

Jackie Schubert, director of Botsford Child Care Center in Farmington Hills, oversees the care of 75 children, ranging in age from infants to pre-school. She considers sunscreen the No. 1 common sense issue when it comes to protecting children from the sun.

"We have parents bring sunscreen from home, then we apply it here," she said. "We recommend they check with their doctors about what's appropriate for their child," she said. She also has parents provide their children with hats and sunglasses.

Playgrounds present another safety issue for children, she said. "Make sure your child wears the appropriate shoes. For playing on playgrounds, open-toed sandals aren't good. In group care, children are more prone to getting their toes stepped on. Also, a tennis shoe has a better grip."

McGeorge advises parents to pay attention to a playground's mulch thickness, which can act as a buffer against falls. "If you have thicker mulch, the chance of serious injury is reduced," he said.

The following summer safety tips are from the American Academy of Pediatrics. They are not a guarantee of an injury-free summer for your children, but they offer some great lessons in common sense for parents:

Fun in the sun

For older children:
■ Cover up: Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses that block 99-100 percent of ultraviolet rays, and cotton clothing with a tight weave.

■ Stay in the shade whenever possible, and avoid sun exposure during the peak intensity hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

■ Use sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. Apply about one ounce per sitting for a young adult. Reapply every two hours, or after swimming or sweating. Some self-tanning products contain sunscreen, but others don't, so read the labels carefully. In addition, tanning oils or baby oil may make skin look shiny and soft, but they provide no protection from the sun.

For young children:
■ Keep babies under 6 months of age out of the direct sunlight. Move your baby to the shade or under a tree, umbrella, or the stroller canopy.

■ Dress babies in lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs and use brimmed hats.

■ Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF (sun protection factor) should be at least 15.

■ Pool safety
■ Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment.

■ Make sure adults are trained in life-saving techniques and CPR so they can rescue a child if necessary.

■ Surround your pool on all four sides with a sturdy five-foot fence. Make sure the gates self-close and self-latch at a height children can't reach.

■ Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook - a long pole with a hook on the end - and a life preserver) and a portable telephone near the pool.

■ Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give children a false sense of security.

■ Children are not developmentally ready for swim lessons until after their 4th birthday. Swim programs for children under 4 should not be seen as a way to decrease the risk of drowning.

Michigan festival planners are gearing up for the fireworks that will light up the nights of Independence Day on July 4 and other summer celebrations. However, many Michiganans may be planning mini-pyrotechnics of their own, using fireworks and sparklers bought at retail stores and stands.

But playing with fireworks - even ones as seemingly harmless as sparklers - can be a dangerous, even deadly, proposition. Each year, fireworks



Keeping cool: Mary and her son Nicholas Arrasmith enjoy a sunny day spent at Bailey Pool in Westland.

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-Dr. Frank McGeorge

Beaumont Hospital
Associate Program Director

■ Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."

Bug safety

■ Don't use scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays on your child.

■ Repellents appropriate for use on children should contain no more than 10 percent DEET. The chemical, which is absorbed through the skin, can cause harm. The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product, so read the label of any product you purchase.

■ Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom.

■ Avoid dressing your child in clothing with bright colors or flowery prints.

■ To remove a visible stinger from skin, gently scrape it off horizontally with a credit card or your fingernail.

Playground safety

There is reason for concern, especially on public playgrounds. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 200,000 preschool and elementary school children visit emergency rooms for care of playground-related injuries. Sixty percent of these injuries will result from falls off swings, monkey bars, climbers or slides. Unfortunately, over a third of the injuries will be severe - fractures, internal injuries, even amputations.

For backyard playgrounds, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

■ Carefully maintain all equipment.

■ Swings should be made of soft materials such as rubber, plastic or canvas.

■ Make sure children cannot reach any moving parts that might pinch or trap any body part.

■ Make sure metal slides are cool to prevent children's legs from getting burned.

■ Parents should never purchase a home trampoline or allow children to use home trampolines.

Bicycle safety

■ Do not push your child to ride a two-wheeled bike until he or she is ready, at about age 5 or 6.

■ Consider the child's coordination and desire to learn to ride. Stick with coaster brakes until your child is older and more experienced.

■ Take your child with you when you shop for the bike, so that he or she can try it out. The value of a properly fitting bike far outweighs the value of surprising your child with a new bike.

■ Buy a bike that is the right size, not one your child has to "grow into." Oversized bikes are especially dangerous. Use the following criteria to test a bike for proper fit:

■ Sitting on the seat with hands on the handlebar, your child must be able to place the balls of both feet on the ground.

■ Straddling the center bar, your child should be able to stand with both feet flat on the ground with about a 1-inch clearance between the crotch and the bar.

■ When buying a bike with hand brakes for an older child, make sure that the child can comfortably grasp the brakes and apply sufficient pressure to stop the bike.

■ A helmet should be standard equipment for your child. Be sure you purchase a Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)-approved helmet.

In spite of parents' best efforts, few children make it through the summer without a few bumps and bruises. "Kids' natural instinct won't be the safest one," said McGeorge.

However, children shouldn't hurt themselves because of safety issues parents overlooked, he stressed. "You cannot protect them from all injuries. All you can do is limit the damage."

Drink Water!

For many children, playing sports are a big part of summer. But whether your child is playing a hard game of softball or baseball or spending an afternoon on your backyard swing, keep her well-hydrated.

For any prolonged physical activity, periodic drinking should be enforced. For example, for each 20 minutes of activity, a child weighing 88 pounds should drink 5 oz of cold tap water or a flavored salted beverage. An adolescent weighing 132 pounds should drink 9 ounces of similar fluid.

All children should drink even if not thirsty.

Avoid injuries by leaving fireworks to the experts



cause over 8,500 injuries, including 2,400 injuries to the eye.

The best way to avoid such accidents, say University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center ophthalmologists, is to attend a public fireworks display instead of using fireworks at home this fireworks season.

And though Americans may feel an added desire to express their patriotism this year, Kellogg eye doctors warn that using fireworks in your backyard can result in a trip to the emergency room - and even permanent blindness or visual impairment.

According to Dr. Theresa M. Nairus, a Kellogg ophthalmologist, the typical accident victim is a teenager who is usually at home, unsupervised, and with a group of friends. In fact, boys between the ages of 13 and 16 sustain three-fourths of all fireworks-related eye injuries.

"One of the reasons fireworks injuries continue to occur is that people don't know how dangerous these devices can be," says Nairus. "Each year, legal fireworks cause thousands of injuries. The

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