

# HealthSense<sup>sm</sup>

the quarterly community magazine of Cox Health Systems [www.coxhealth.com](http://www.coxhealth.com)

by Laurie Glenn Cunningham

Back to school is back to busy. School supply shopping, new clothes buying, updating [immunizations](#) . . . Oh? That last one didn't make your "to do" list?

Think again. Your child must be current with his or her immunizations for admission to school and daycare. And if you wait until the week before school you may not get it done, warns pediatric nurse practitioner Leta Hohl.

"It's important because it's the law," says Hohl. "But the real reason is to prevent disease. Otherwise, you're gambling with your child's health."

Hohl, along with Trudi Scott, Julie Rawlings, Linda Page and Arturo Ibarra make up the [Children's Miracle Network's](#)

**Make the grade  
with back-to-school**

## IMMUNIZATIONS

C.A.R.E. (Children Are Really Excellent) Mobile staff. The C.A.R.E. Mobile is a mobile health clinic on wheels, providing free immunizations and well-screenings for Ozarks' children, from infancy to 17 years of age.

[The C.A.R.E. Mobile](#) staff is passionate about their work. Says pediatric nurse practitioner Scott: "The choice not to immunize is the choice to get the disease."

Immunizations are shots given to prevent disease. A vaccine contains a small amount of the organism (or its products) that causes disease such as whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus, diphtheria, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, etc. The vaccine works by helping the body's defense system recognize and quickly attack the specific disease before it can cause illness. Some immunizations are given in a single shot, while others require several shots over a period of time.

Side effects from immunizations are mild and few. In addition to the initial discomfort of getting a shot, these side effects may include slight bruising at the injection site, minimal fever and fussiness. A dose of Tylenol or Motrin before the shot will usually help ease discomfort.

"If a child gets a high fever of more than 102 degrees or if they cry for a long period of time and are inconsolable, call your health care provider," Scott advises.

Although myths proliferate, there are few valid reasons to not get immunized. And thanks to the C.A.R.E. Mobile, the

issues of cost and accessibility are no longer a barrier in southwest Missouri. The staff maintains a regular schedule in Springfield, Branson and Monett. For the C.A.R.E. Mobile's schedule go to [www.coxhealth.com](http://www.coxhealth.com) or call 269-KIDS. In addition, the [Springfield-Greene County Health Department](#) provides immunizations at no cost or parents can schedule an appointment with their regular family health care provider.

A child's immunization record is just as important as his or her birth certificate. You should know where your child's immunization record is and take it with you when your child is scheduled for an update. Technology doesn't yet exist for a centralized immunization database in Missouri, so it's a parent's responsibility to keep the child on schedule with their immunizations and the record updated.

"We're lucky in this country to have good health care available to us," Hohl says. "So be positive with your kids when it's time for them to get their shots." ❖

*Laurie Glenn Cunningham is the director of Public Relations for Cox Health Systems.*



**THIS ISSUE**

**of HealthSense we've put a focus on back-to-school health and wellness. Please read on to learn more about immunizations, raising a child athlete, choosing a physician and transportation safety.**

# How to choose a physician

by Donna Barton

Most people agree that choosing a physician is not a decision to be taken lightly; however many admit they did more research before they bought their last household appliance than they did selecting their health care provider.

So how is it that we can spend days mulling over minor purchases, yet pick something as important as a doctor out of the yellow pages in five minutes? According to Linda Huckaby, Cox information and physician referral line coordinator, one reason is many people simply do not realize there are services available that offer help and advice on physicians and health care programs. Others make hasty choices because they underestimate their options or they wait until they are ill or their loved one is ill to look for a caregiver, she says.

Some individuals find themselves in search of a physician because they have moved, changed insurance providers, are expecting a baby or because their current physician retires or dies. "People want to be proactive in their health care but sometimes circumstances leave them feeling like they don't know where to start or what questions to ask," Huckaby says.

In these cases Huckaby suggests applying the elements commonly scrutinized when deciding on any other product or service – cost, convenience, location, options and reputation, for example – to choosing a physician. Individuals should ask the

following questions: what kind of physician am I looking for? Where is the physician located? What hospital are they affiliated with? What is the pay schedule? Is the physician accepting new patients? Huckaby also reminds individuals to check with their HMO or PPO when choosing a caregiver, as this could also impact your choice.

Cox Health Systems offers physician referral, weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., by calling 269-INFO(4636). Staffed by [Cox Women's Center](#), information on Cox physicians and specialists, including educational background and professional experience, can be obtained. The Cox Info Line staff also offers the [American Medical Association's](#) Guide to Choosing a Physician. An advocate for establishing healthy relationships between patients and physicians, the AMA recommends obtaining information about a physician from a local or state medical society, from friends and family, as well from hospital-sponsored physician referral services.

Once you have a potential caregiver in mind the AMA also advises visiting the office or clinic. How are you greeted when you enter? Everyone in the office should be calm, polite and friendly. How does the office look? The office should be neat, clean and generally comfortable. Does the physician act in a way that gives you confidence? A patient's comfort level is an important part of health care.

"The main thing is to be informed," Huckaby says. "Because those who are informed are more successful in finding a physician that meets their needs and expectations." ❖

*Donna Barton is a Public Relations assistant for Cox Health Systems.*

## Regional Services

At Cox Health Systems our goal is to keep people healthy. Whether you live in Springfield or outside the area, Cox is there to take care of you and your family.

In the late 1980s, Cox Health Systems [Regional Services](#) was developed to bring medical services close to home. In 1996, a partnership with Ferrell-Duncan Clinic was formalized to offer multispecialty care. We believe it is important that health care be available as close to the need as possible. That's why we're still growing today, with clinics in 19 counties in southwest Missouri and northern Arkansas.

In addition to our more than 50 physician clinics in the region, Cox offers care in more than 40 specialties including neonatology, pediatric neurology, perinatology and pulmonology, to name a few.

For information on a doctor or physician near you call 269-INFO or log on to [www.coxhealth.com](http://www.coxhealth.com).

## Back-to-school

# Safety Tips

by Patty Parrish

Preparing students for back to school takes lessons in safety as well as academics.

Children ages 5 to 9 are at the greatest risk of traffic-related pedestrian injury or death. Injuries often occur when a child darts out between parked cars, walks along the edge of the road or crosses in the middle of the block or in front of a turning car. To keep your students safe consider these helpful tips:

Children who walk to and from school should always take the same route, preferably one with few street crossings, and be taught to obey traffic signals, cross when the street is

clear and to wear brightly colored clothing if walking late in the evening or at night.

A bicycle can really take a child places, but a bike that is too big or too small can be uncomfortable and more difficult for the child to control and maneuver. Headphones should not be worn – they can block traffic noises that children need to be aware of. Cyclists should always wear an approved bicycle helmet that has plenty of ventilation holes and fits securely, and children should be encouraged to use sidewalks or bicycle lanes when possible.

Most school bus-related injuries occur when children are getting on or off the bus. Children should allow plenty of time to meet the bus and should wait until the bus stops, the door opens and the driver signals them before attempting to enter. When getting off the bus, children should take care that clothing with drawstrings, scarves and book bags with straps do not get caught in the handrail or door.

Make children aware that if something drops and rolls near or under the bus they should never try to pick it up. The bus driver may not see them and begin to drive away.

It takes some time, but safety awareness and practices make a better school year for both parents and students. ❖

*Patty Parrish is the trauma coordinator for Cox Health Systems.*



by Stacy Fender

So your child wants to play sports. He says he's ready — after all, he and dad have played the game for years. He knows the basics, he can fit the practices into his schedule. He's set. But what about you?

Raising a child athlete takes more parental effort than dropping your son or daughter at the field for practice and making sure the uniform is clean. According to Janice Evans, the mother of three athletic teenage boys, raising kids to play sports takes awareness, knowledge and effort. "You can't simply sign your child up for a sport and expect them to enjoy it and do well. You have to help your child do what is best, so they can thrive."

While helping your pint-size Sammy Sosa succeed may sound like a tall order, experts say that by concentrating on a few key areas, you can greatly increase your child's chances of successful, injury-free play.

### Get plenty of ZZZ's

Sleep. To a child athlete, it's vital. Children who fail to get enough sleep have difficulty concentrating in the classroom and on the field. Poor concentration can lead not only to trouble understanding directions, but also to fatigue and an increased chance for injury. "Getting plenty of rest is a priority in our house," says Evans. "I can always tell when the boys haven't had the sleep they need. They'll have a difficult day at school and practice, and when they come home they'll be exhausted."

### Eat (and drink) smart

David Dade, a registered dietician at Cox, says the nutritional needs of young athletes differ from those of other kids. "Athletic children need nutrition to promote a child's normal growth and development, plus the added requirements of sports. They need an increase in both calories and nutrients."

But not empty calories. Says Dade: "You can get extra calories from a soft drink. But those calories won't help you perform better." Add additional healthy calories to your athletic child's diet by serving more complex carbohydrates like bagels, graham crackers and pasta. To ensure they receive a variety of nutrients, offer food in a variety of colors — yellow bananas, green peppers, orange carrots. And avoid using dietary supplements. No research has been done on how these products affect children and teens. "Focus on a healthy diet instead. Supplements aren't a good habit to get into with kids," Dade says.

Also be certain your child drinks plenty of water during practice and play, and learns to respond to the signs of thirst. While sports drinks like Gatorade are most beneficial to those involved in long-duration activities, it's OK to serve them to your children if the flavor will help them drink more.

### Play it safe

"A lot of kids today are in year-round activities. But a child should have some downtime — some unscheduled free play," says [Cox Sports Medicine](#) certified

athletic trainer and strength and conditioning specialist Kevin Day. "We treat a lot of overuse injuries like tendinitis in kids because they go, go, go and never give their bodies a time to rest."

Kids get injured while playing sports for other reasons, too. Often, they don't warm-up or cool-down properly, or they become fatigued and can't concentrate as they should. Luckily, most sports-related injuries in children are minor. If your child is injured, Day says a good formula to remember is I-C-E + Rest. Ice the injury, compress the injury, elevate the injury and get some rest.

### Take the physical seriously

One final tip: Sports physicals are required for a reason. Says Day: "They not only help identify existing problems you may not have known about, they give you a baseline to judge changes by should a problem develop."

Physicals are not meant to disqualify your child from playing a sport. They should instead reassure you that your child can safely play the sport he or she wants to. Take advantage of the physical to ask your child's doctor questions about concerns you may have.

Parenting a child athlete isn't easy, but those who do are quick to add there's no better reward than watching your child play a sport they love, and play it well. ❖

*Stacy Fender is a Public Relations assistant for Cox Health Systems.*



# Raising a child, raising an athlete