

## AUGUST 2009

### Back to School Safety Issue



## Planning for the New School Year

In the next few weeks, your kids will be back at school and in contact with hundreds of other children, playing hard, sharing secrets - and sodas, and that's just the first week. Sending your children back to school these days takes know how and preparation.

### Gearing up for Swine Flu

No one knows if an epidemic is coming, but the Center for Disease Control (CDC) noted an increase this summer. Schools nationwide are taking extra precautions, and though the CDC says a vaccine should be available early in the fall, experts recommend the following:

- Purchasing bottles of alcohol-based gel and putting one in your child's backpack
- Making sure that the family understands "flu etiquette" including covering the nose

and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and washing hands with soap and water for 15-20 seconds, or using the hand gel, immediately after coughing or sneezing

- Keeping hands away from eyes, nose and mouth
- Instilling in your children that these measures are actually more important at school where they are exposed to other children

Children with a high fever, rapid breathing, and who appear lethargic or have any combination of those symptoms, should be taken to their local emergency departments. The CDC also strongly suggests that any child with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher be kept at home until 24 hours after the fever has lifted.

### What's it To You?

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) warns that children should not wear bike helmets when playing on playground equipment, as there have been reported cases of injury in children when their bike helmets became stuck in openings on playground equipment. Remind your child to remove his or her helmet immediately upon arriving at school.



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## To and From School Safety

Getting your child to and from school safely has more possible pitfalls than when they are either at home or at school. Consider:

- Dressing children in clothing sufficiently visible to motorists
- Supervising younger children walking or biking to school or as they wait at the school bus stop
- Partnering your child with another child in the neighborhood with whom they can walk to school or ride with on the bus
- Teaching your child the rules for walking, bicycling, riding in a passenger car, or on a school bus or transit bus
- Ensuring that your child has memorized his or her phone number and address and putting that information in his or her backpack
- If children are riding a school bus, make sure they understand how to safely wait for the bus
- Making sure your children use sidewalks and stay out of vacant lots, fields and other locations with few people

## Lightening the Load: Backpack Recommendations

According to a survey by Backpack Safety of America of chiropractors nationwide, kids are coming to their doctors with back, neck and shoulder pain because of the weight they are now carrying in their backpacks. Not only are they packing heavy schoolbooks and even band instruments and running shoes, many are packing laptops, cell phones and MP3 players. Doctors suggest that parents know the following to help minimize injury and fatigue:

- Buy an appropriate-size backpack that ends a few inches above the waist and has soft, padded straps for comfort. Look for a pack with compartments that help distribute the weight, or try a model with wheels
- Students should not carry a backpack on one shoulder or carry over 10 percent of his or her body weight
- If possible, buy two sets of books (one for the classroom and one for home)
- Instruct your kids to bend their knees when they first lift their packs

## Helpful Resources

The Center for Disease Control

- <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

American Association for Health Education

- <http://www.aahperd.org/AAHE/>
- <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

American Academy of Pediatrics

- <http://www.aap.org/>

American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons

- <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/>

Backpack Safety America

- <http://www.backpacksafe.com/topic.asp?pid=1>
- <http://www.backpacksafety.com/>

## Precaution for Outerwear in the Fall

Consumer Product Safety Commission staff concluded that drawstrings on jackets may present a strangulation hazard. Therefore, the Committee recommends that consumers purchase children's upper outerwear that has alternative closures to drawstrings, such as snaps, buttons, Velcro or elastic. The CPSC recommends removal of drawstrings on jackets sized 2T to 12.