

New Guidelines Will Help Keep Young Passengers Safe

New advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) will change the way many parents buckle up their children for a drive. The AAP now recommends that parents keep their toddlers in rear-facing car seats until age 2, or until they reach the maximum height and weight for their seat. It also advises that most children will need to ride in a booster seat until they have reached 4 feet 9 inches tall or are between 8 and 12 years of age.

The previous policy, from 2002, advised that it is safest for infants and toddlers to ride rear-facing up to the limits of the car seat, but it also cited age 12 months and 20 pounds as a minimum. As a result, many parents turned the seat to face the front of the car when their child celebrated his or her first birthday. “Parents often look forward to transitioning from one stage to the next, but these transitions should generally be delayed until they’re necessary, when the child fully outgrows the limits for his or her current stage,” said Dennis Durbin, MD, FAAP, lead author of the policy statement. “The ‘age 2’ recommendation is not a deadline, but rather a guideline to help parents decide when to make

the transition. Smaller children will benefit from remaining rear-facing longer, while other children may reach the maximum height or weight before 2 years of age.” Children should transition from a rear-facing seat to a forward-facing seat with a harness, until they reach the maximum weight or height for that seat. After that, a booster will make sure the vehicle’s lap and shoulder belts fit properly. The shoulder belt should lie across the middle of the chest and shoulder, not near the neck or face. The lap belt should fit low and snug on the hips and upper thighs, not across the belly. Children should not ride in the front seat of a vehicle until they are 13 years old.

American Academy of Pediatrics. 2011.

Still Online at 3 a.m.?

The Internet is useful, convenient, and fun. However, online activities can sometimes take the place of normal daily activities, such as getting to work on time, sleeping enough, or exercising.

If not an actual addiction, spending excessive amounts of recreational time on the computer or a digital hand-held device qualifies as compulsive behavior at the very least. But as psychologist John Grohol points out, “Some people also spend too much time reading, watching television, and working.”

A particular activity in and of itself isn’t the problem. Eating, exercising, and working are part of a healthful lifestyle. Even shopping is normal. After all, everyone needs to buy something from time to time. In moderation, “surfing the net” and texting are normal activities. But if you have a compulsive, emotional dependence on an activity or behavior, you are addicted. For many people today – and for most children and

teenagers – using the Internet is as common as watching television and talking on the phone were a generation ago. It isn’t reasonable to declare the computer or smartphone off limits. Moderation is the key. Remember to:

- Plan face-to-face time with family and friends.
- Be physically active every day (and don’t take your laptop or smartphone with you).
- Get your work and required tasks done before playing online.
- Eat regular, healthy meals. And don’t eat at the computer.
- Keep your computer in a room other than the one you sleep in. Sleep in one place, eat in another, and compute in a third area.
- Limit the amount of time you spend online (apart from computer use for work purposes during work hours). For best physical health, 1 hour or less is best for screen time – TV and computer combined.

Learn more about internet addiction: <http://tinyurl.com/2f288xt>

Learn more about addiction: <http://www.hbo.com/addiction>

Psych Central. 2011.

What Symptoms Are Not Safe to Ignore?

Regular medical exams are a good idea. But sometimes a symptom appears just after or long before a scheduled exam. Some symptoms require immediate attention – whether you're age 20, 47, or 75. When the following physical conditions appear as described, call your doctor.

- **Fatigue.** Working extra hours or recovering from the flu might explain your fatigue. But if you are feeling really worn out for more than a week and don't know why, it could indicate a medical problem.
- **Cough.** See your doctor right away if 1) your cough lasts a week or more, especially if you are a smoker; 2) you're coughing up thick phlegm – especially if it has blood in it; or 3) your cough is accompanied by shortness of breath and weight loss.
- **Pain.** Check out persistent and severe pain in a specific area lasting 3 days or more, without an obvious explanation. The pain might awaken you from sleep, or come on for no apparent reason.
- **Chest pain.** Chest pain from exertion or pain that feels like a squeezing or heavy weight on your chest could indicate a heart attack. If the pain extends into your left shoulder or into your jaw, get emergency care immediately. Ignoring chest pain can be fatal.

- **Blood.** Blood in the rectum, stool, urine, or coughed-up phlegm may or may not indicate a tumor or other serious condition, but you won't know unless you have it checked out.
- **A new lump or bump.** It doesn't need to be painful or bleeding – just newly observable. Lumps and bumps that occur rapidly, become sore, and go away in a week or two are not usually a concern.
- **Moles.** If you have a mole that is abnormally shaped or is fast growing, itches, or bleeds, you need to find out if it is a medical concern.
- **Weight loss.** Losing weight when you're not trying to could indicate disease or illness.
- **Headaches.** Frequent, painful headaches that are long lasting should be checked out. If a headache starts in the morning and increases when you cough or sneeze, it could indicate a serious condition.
- **Stroke signs.** Weakness in an arm or leg, numbness or tingling in an arm, leg, or your face, or difficulty with speech can indicate the onset of a stroke. Get help immediately!

Going to the doctor and being told your symptoms are not serious won't kill you. Waiting too long to get help for life-threatening symptoms could.

Creagan ET. How Not to Be My Patient. Health Communications, Inc. Deerfield Beach, Florida.

You Can Lose Weight by Swimsuit Season

Yes, you can look better in a swimsuit. But diet drinks, high-protein diets, or liposuction aren't the long-term solutions to weight control. Neither are high-protein diets, such as the Atkins and Dukan diets, that promise rapid weight loss.

Evidence shows that people who lose weight gradually and steadily (about 1 to 2 pounds per week) are more successful at keeping weight off. Healthy weight loss isn't just about a diet or program. It's about an ongoing lifestyle that includes long-term changes in daily exercise and eating habits.

Physical movement is key to weight loss and fitness. Exercise at least 30 minutes daily – 45 to 90 minutes is better. You don't have to start out

running 5 miles (or even 1 mile). You don't have to run at all. But you do need to be active.

Pay attention to what you eat. There are no "magic" foods to help you lose weight. To lose weight, you must use up more calories than you take in. Since 1 pound equals 3,500 calories, you need to reduce your caloric intake by 500-1,000 calories per day to lose 1-2 pounds per week. This does not mean skipping meals or going on an extreme diet. Eat plenty of plant-based foods (i.e., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes). They are lower in calories and higher in fiber and other nutrients than animal-based foods (i.e., meat, dairy, and cheese).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Access a step-by-step guide for losing weight: www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/losing_weight/getting_started.html

ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

Q: What exercises or food choices will help me achieve a flatter stomach?

A: Go to <http://www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-flat-stomach.pdf> to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: paulaw@wellsource.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

Health Challenge: "Lower Your Blood Pressure" available at: www.wellsource.info/wn/hc-lowerBP.pdf.

Get your blood pressure checked. Whether your blood pressure is healthy or high, this Challenge will benefit your overall health.