

Risk Matters : Reducing Risk With Health Suite Strategies

Communication:

The best way to contact parents who seem to avoid answering their phone is to have the student use their cell phone — parents usually pick up every time. If applicable, based on your institution's policy, provide "excessive visits notes" to parents, counselors, and administrators as a gentle reminder that the student has been in the Health Suite on a frequent basis. If possible, offer to have the school physician do a physical if the parent desires. If there are no physical findings, hopefully, this communication will alert the parents to explore emotional issues which might be necessitating the "frequent flyer pattern."

Playground Accidents:

Taking pictures of your playground equipment and posting them up in the health suite or a photo album provide the nurse with a valuable resource for better understanding what happened. It also will allow the child (if able) to identify the picture(s) of the equipment that he/she was playing on at the time of the event. This will provide the nurse an opportunity to have the equipment checked to ensure it is safe, and in some instances, it may be necessary to request that the particular equipment be removed.

Medication:

If applicable, print out a copy of the student's digital picture for their medication bottle, the medication sheet, the student's ECP, etc. This strategy will help to prevent medication errors caused by misidentification, and unfamiliarity, especially when float nurses and other qualified personnel administer medications. If you are having problems with securing medication and resources are limited, explore the possibility with your principal of having a locking tool cart purchased from a supply store. It has adjustable drawer inserts, wheels, and it can be locked. Remember, no matter how creative you are in meeting the needs of the day-to-day operations, you must remain compliant with the policies of the organization, the school, and regulatory agencies. Do your homework before you act!

These tips have been provided to assist those who have very limited resources and often the only option is improvising. If this is your situation, do it in a way that you are maintaining a safe environment for the student as well as promoting risk prevention.

References: (pdf) Tips from New York School Nurses and nurses across America, Intranet resource

Nyrtha D. Braxton, MGA, RN
Ambulatory Risk Coordinator

Lack of sleep may shrink your brain

Can a lack of sleep affect the size of your brain? A recent study suggests that its possible. European researchers looked at 147 adults between the ages of 20 and 84. With two MRI scans, they observed the link between sleep problems like insomnia and the study participants' brain volume. The first scan was taken before patients completed a questionnaire regarding their sleep habits. The second scan was done approximately 3 1/2 years later. The questionnaire showed that 35 percent of those in the study met the criteria for poor sleep health. Investigators found that those with sleep problems had a more rapid decline in brain volume or size over the course of the study than those who slept well. The results were even more significant in participants over the age of 60.

Numerous studies have shown the importance of sleep and the effect sleep deprivation can have on our brains. It is well known that poor sleep patterns can contribute to such brain disorders as Alzheimer's and dementia. Therefore if a lack of sleep can lead to memory loss, the size of the brain would also be affected. "We know that a lack of sleep can lead to all kinds of problems," explained Dr. Neal Maru, a neurologist and sleep specialist with Integrated Sleep Services in Alexandria, Virginia, who is not associated with the study. "Poor sleep can affect our immune systems, our cardiovascular health, weight, and memory.

It is not yet known whether poor sleep quality is a cause or consequence of changes in brain structure, " said author Claire Sexton of the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom. "There are effective treatments for sleep problems, so future research needs to test whether improving people's quality of sleep could slow the rate of brain volume loss. If that is the case, improving people's sleep habits could be an important way to improve brain health," she added.

Val Willingham, CNN News

Seven Surprising Facts from a School Nurse

School nursing started out as a practical solution for Beth Matthey. The mom of three liked the hours. Now, 27 years later, she says it was the perfect career choice — creative, independent, and full of meaning. Matthey was asked what parents might be surprised to know about her job and their kids:

1. Sadness is one of the most common illnesses she sees in students. “Kids are anxious and want to do well,” she says, noting a 2012 National Association of School Nurses report that the top five health conditions of US children are mental health-related, issues that school nurses spend about a third of their time helping students cope with.
2. Every kid should carry a water bottle. Dehydration is often the cause of headaches, another common complaint among kids. She says that another culprit is a lack of sleep.
3. School nurses need to know your secrets. In addition to any chronic conditions your student is coping with, update your school’s nurse on any big family news like an illness, death, or divorce. Your instinct might be to keep such facts private, but the nurse can offer your child valuable support.
4. Your kids are not eating the lunch you pack. Often times, teenagers just snack throughout the day.
5. A “mental health day” is not a stress solution. Allowing your anxious teen a day off will not get to the root of the issue. “If a kid is too anxious or worried to go to school, find out why,” Matthey adds. It could be something as simple as a missed homework assignment or it could be related to bullying.
6. Teens need vaccines. Make sure yours is up to date on the Tdap or tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.
7. A school nurse can be a teen’s and parent’s best friend. Matthey sees herself as supporting students, physically and emotionally. “School nurses provide a safety net,” she says.

Dorothy Foltz-Gray

<http://americanprofile.com/articles/7-surprising-facts-from-a-school-nurse-video/>

Healthy Recipe of the Month– Tuscan Smoked Turkey & Bean Soup

Prep Time: 1 hour

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup celery, diced
- 1/2 cup onion, diced
- 1/3 cup carrots, diced
- 1 1/2 cups navy beans, no salt
- 1/2 pound smoked turkey, diced
- 3 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 1/2 cups kale, trimmed without stems
- Salt (optional)

Directions:

1. Sauté celery, onions, and carrots in stockpot until softened
2. Drain and rinse navy beans
3. Place vegetables, turkey, and beans in stockpot
4. Add chicken stock, pepper, parsley, and thyme. Bring to a boil
5. Reduce burner to low heat and simmer for 30 minutes
6. Cut fresh kale into small pieces and add to soup
7. Simmer an additional 10 minutes. Serve immediately. Salt to taste

September 2014 Health Observances:

Gynecological Cancer Awareness Month

National Suicide Prevention Week (7-13)

World Suicide Prevention Day (10)

National Celiac Disease Awareness Day (13)

National School Backpack Awareness Day (17)

National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day (18)

National Women’s Health and Fitness Day (24)

Family Health and Fitness Day (27)

World Heart Day (29)

This newsletter is published monthly by the Children’s School Services School Health Nursing Program.

Barbara S. Scott, MSN, NE-BC, RN-BC
Vice President

Natalie Peart, MA
Program Coordinator, Editor
npeart@childrensnational.org