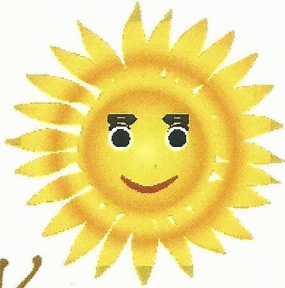


Vitamin D What every parent should know!

By Kristi Wees



What do you know about Vitamin D? Not much? Please read on. This vitamin is crucial for optimal health (as are all vitamins), especially children's health! Vitamin D is particularly connected with immune system health in adults and children.

Vitamin D is known as the SUNSHINE vitamin

"A fat-soluble vitamin occurring in several forms, especially vitamin D2 or vitamin D3, required for normal growth of teeth and bones, and produced in general by ultraviolet irradiation of sterols found in milk, fish and eggs." (thefreedictionary.com)

Vitamin D levels drop in the winter-time and drop depending where you live

Since Vitamin D comes from sunshine, this drop in the winter is due to lessened hours of daylight and thus lessened sun exposure, with the peak vitamin D levels occurring in September (just after summer) and the dip in D levels occurring in February. (PMID: 18298852) Anyone living at a latitude above Atlanta, GA (Yup, that means Pittsburgh, PA!), cannot make any Vitamin D (from sunlight) in the winter months (November-February). The time of day is important too! Even in the summer time, most Vitamin D production occurs between 10am-3pm. (youtu.be/1qirmKIUKVQ)

Vitamin D has an impact on those with ASTHMA

"Children with asthma appear to be at increased risk of vitamin D insufficiency." (PMID: 23069123) "The frequency of vitamin D deficiency and insufficiency was higher in children with asthma,

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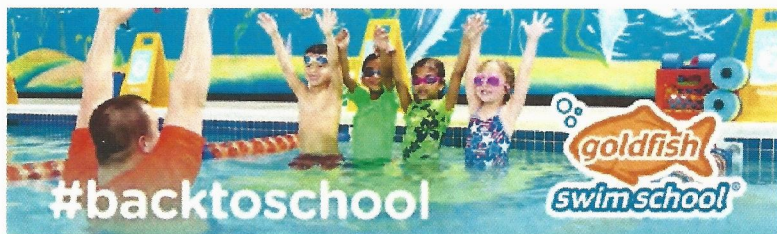
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Vitamin D... continued from page 5

compared to the controls. Therefore, we suggest that lower levels of vitamin D are associated with poor asthma control and increased asthma severity." (PMID: 26813450)

Vitamin D has an impact on some children with AUTISM

"Vitamin D deficiency might contribute to the etiology of ASD. Supplementation of vitamin D3, which is a safe and cost-effective form of treatment, may significantly improve the outcome of some children with ASD, especially younger children." (PMID: 26783092)

The drop in Vitamin D levels in the winter may account for the "flu season"

"Aloia and Li-Ng found 2,000 IU of vitamin D per day abolished the seasonality of influenza and dramatically reduced its self-reported incidence." (PMID: 18298852)

What should you do with these five fascinating tidbits of information about Vitamin D? Talk to your child's pediatrician and ask them what your child's Vitamin D levels are. If your child has never had their vitamin D measured, the doctor may order a blood test for Vitamin D. Home kits are available for Vitamin D testing which can be done with a finger prick for a testing kit fee. (vitamindcouncil.org/testkit/) It is crucial that you speak with your doctor and do some of your own research as well on what is the optimal and ideal level of vitamin D for your child's BEST health outcomes. ■

Kristi is a pediatric patient advocate with Empowered Medical Advocacy (EmpoweredAdvocacy.com). She helps parents research and navigate to the root of their children's health concerns. She lives with her husband and two children in Gibsonia PA. She can be reached at kristi@EmpoweredAdvocacy.com

Girls of Steel... continued from page 16

a male-dominated, but here in the Burgh, we have strong, smart, hardworking girls who certainly break that mold.

The Girls of Steel make Pittsburgh proud. For more information, please contact girlsofsteelrobotics@gmail.com. ■

Pittsburgh writer Ann K. Howley has never built a robot or used a riveter, but she doesn't think it's too late to try.

Dear teacher... continued from page 23

You may gain a greater perspective on what middle school is like by reading "Middle School: The Inside Story: What Kids Tell Us, But Don't Tell You." ■

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com.

Little yogis... continued from page 39

Healthy choices. Learning to tune into their body and breath helps kids pause before making decisions.

Imagination. Hop like a frog. Fly like a bird. Can you make your body look or feel like a boat?

Joy. Moving, laughing, breathing and working together all increase a child's happiness.

Kinesthetic awareness. Partner poses in yoga increase kids' understanding of where they are in space.

Language enrichment. Yoga classes expand a child's vocabulary through stories and by incorporating the names of body parts, animals and more.

Minimize medication. Practicing yoga, with an emphasis on meditation skills, has allowed some children to reduce or eliminate their need for attention-deficit drugs.

Non-competitive. Yoga invites children to listen to their own needs and to move in ways that are safe and enjoyable, without comparing themselves to others.

Organs. Exercise and the upright posture emphasized in yoga combat slouching and give your child's internal organs room to function optimally.

Proprioceptive awareness. Practicing yoga poses improves nervous system function and improves children's felt-sense of how their body is connected.

Quality time. Chances are your yogini will want to share yoga and mindfulness practices with you at home, giving you a new way to connect.

Reading skills. Yoga incorporates rhythm, songs or chanting and movement, all of which build the pathways young children need for future reading success.

Self-esteem. Learning new skills and meeting challenges increase confidence.

Time-out to tune-in. Savasana, lying still with eyes closed at the end of class, is often the kids' favorite part of yoga.

Uplifting. Increased heart rate and respiration have been shown to improve mood.

Visualizations. Exercise the imagination while teaching kids to release negative emotions and cultivate a more positive emotional state.

Wisdom. Even the littlest yogis can begin to develop a connection to their intuition - their wise self that will guide them as they grow.

Relax and have fun. What more do you need, really?

Young and old. Seek out a family yoga class where toddlers, older kids, parents and even grandparents are welcome to share in the yoga fun, creating connections and boosting everyone's health and well-being.

Zzzz... A gentle yoga routine before bed, combined with slow, relaxed breathing helps kids, and their parents, fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly. ■

Writer and Editor Heather Lee Leap is a Next Generation Yoga Teacher. She leads yoga classes and workshops for children and families in the Pacific Northwest. Find her at www.HeatherLeeLeap.com/

School transition... continued from page 31

the dog and the cow?"; "Which one is smaller?"; "Which is the most colorful?"). Stop and ask how they think the story may end. Draw pictures about the book.

- "Field trips" to the zoo, parks, and museums—Trips to these places provide a great opportunity to build vocabulary, social skills, and overall language. Name objects and describe what they look like and how they are used. Ask those questions of your child. Talk about how the animals feel, sound, and move; talk about what they eat and where they live (e.g., oceans, mountains, beach, jungle). Run, skip, and hop around the park and talk about those movement words. In the museum, talk about things you don't use or see in your world anymore and how they were used.

Dixon advises that if you have concerns about your child's communication skills, contact your local school district to be put in touch with a certified speech-language pathologist, or search the ASHA website at <http://www.asha.org/profind/> to find a professional. By practicing important skills, and identifying any potential communication problems early, you can set your child on a path to academic and social success.