

EARLY LEARNING PARENTS' PAGES

The official newsletter of the Office of Early Learning



A look inside
this issue:



SAFE TOYS &
GIFTS MONTH
&
CENSUS 2020

GIVE THE
GIFT OF TIME

SLEEP IN
HEAVENLY
PEACE
&
STEP UP FOR
STUDENTS

SPECIAL
EDUCATION
DAY



Wash Away Colds and Flu Germs

It seems that young children need to touch everything in their environment. Dirt, bugs, pets, rocks and other things your child finds most interesting are usually covered in germs. Your child's fingers, along with the germs, may end up in his mouth in a matter of minutes. The next morning your child may wake up with a cold, a virus or the flu. One way to combat constant colds, viruses or the flu is to teach your child to wash their hands frequently and show them the correct way to wash their hands.

National Handwashing Week is December 1 – 7, 2019. Use this week as a reminder to focus your child's attention on handwashing. There are five recommended steps to washing your hands that help kill germs according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Continue reading on page 2

Practice the steps with your child at home and remind them to use the same steps when they are at school or with friends. If no water is available, tell your child to use hand sanitizer. Free hand hygiene materials for teaching your pre-school child when to wash their hands and why it's important are available from the [Cleaning Institute](#). The free materials include digital copies of a storybook, some coloring sheets, music tracks (mp3) and sheet music.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kids Health have information and posters for children to learn more about the importance of washing their hands. For young children, PBS has an episode (120) of Sid the Science Kid that discusses why you should wash your hands and a handwashing activity for parents to do with their children. Teaching your child the importance of washing their hands and making handwashing a habit in your family will save you many trips to the doctor in years to come.

Be Wise, Immunize

The flu season begins in October and may run as late as May. Doctors recommend that families get their **flu shots** as early as possible. If you and your child have not gotten a flu shot, it is not too late to get one. The flu is more dangerous than colds. Thousands of children are hospitalized and some children die from the flu every year. The younger the age of the child the greater the risk of complications caused by the flu.

Babies younger than 6 months old cannot be vaccinated. It is especially important that family members, care givers and family friends are vaccinated so they will not expose young babies to the flu virus. Children aged 6 months to 5 years old are at high risk for getting the flu. Many children at this age are at risk of complications from the flu virus and should visit the doctor if they get the flu.

For more information about childhood immunizations and the flu virus visit:

<http://bit.ly/flu vaccine kids health> and
<http://bit.ly/vaccine child quiz>.

December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month

December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month. [Prevent Blindness America](#) asks families to give their children age appropriate, safe toys during the holidays and provides [guidelines](#) to help you select safe toys. Manufacturers must follow guidelines for safety for different age groups. Many young children choke on small toys or pieces of toys because they put small objects in their mouths. Toy manufacturers must account for this when designing toys for young children and are required to label toys with age appropriate labels. [Age levels for toys](#) are based on safety factors not the intellectual level or maturity of a child. The [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (NAEYC) urges parents to select toys based on their child's stage of development and abilities. Here are some ideas for age appropriate, safe toys for your child.

Infants like to look at faces and bright colors. They are fascinated with sounds and like to touch objects with different textures. They use all of their senses to examine everything in their environment. They like to listen to voices and enjoy you reading books to them, especially books that have rhymes and poems.

- Toys they can hold or reach for, put in their mouths and use to make noise
- Toys with faces, bright colors and toys that make different sounds such as rattles, soft dolls, large rings, squeeze toys, and teething toys
- Textured balls or similar toys they can hold, shake, reach out for
- Books they can hold and are safe to put in their mouths
- Recordings of lullabies and simple songs

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7- to 12-month-olds are on the move and enjoy toys they can hold and manipulate. They love to drop things in containers and empty them out over and over again. Soft toys they can climb on or over help them develop their large muscles. They enjoy toys that lead to pretend play with family and caregivers.

- Soft blocks and balls
- Plastic containers of different sizes
- Small baby dolls, stuffed animals and puppets
- Water toys to use in the bathtub
- Wooden or plastic vehicles for pretend play
- Large balls, push or pull toys
- Soft toys they can climb on or over

1-year-olds can walk and move quickly and climb stairs. They like to build or stack things. They are beginning to have better small motor control and like toys they can manipulate. They are interested in using crayons and paint and may begin to explore drawing or painting. Bathtub markers and paints are good gifts for the budding artist.

- Wooden or cardboard blocks or boxes
- Wooden puzzles with large pieces
- Toys with dials, switches, knobs and lids
- Art materials such as non-toxic crayons, washable markers and paint, and large sheets of paper
- Dolls, doll beds, and baby carriages or strollers
- Toy phones, toy steering wheels, small brooms and toy vacuums

2-year-olds are learning lots of words and enjoy books and songs. They have better control of their hands and fingers and can play with smaller toys and manipulate smaller objects. They like toys that help develop their small and large muscles.

2-year-olds enjoy imitating adults and older children and love pretend play and creating art with paints and crayons.

- Blocks or other stacking and building toys
- Smaller transportation toys and construction sets
- Non-toxic, washable crayons, paint and markers with large sheets of paper
- Sand and water play toys
- Dolls, dress-up clothes, puppets and stuffed animals
- Toy instruments
- Large and small balls, small ride on toys
- Wood Puzzles with 4 to 12 pieces, blocks that snap together, and objects to sort
- Pictures books with more details and words

3- to 5-year-olds have longer attention spans than toddlers, talk a lot and ask lots of questions. They like to experiment and pretend with new objects and use toys in many different ways. They love toys that help develop their large muscles and help with small muscle control.

- Blocks of different sizes, shape and colors
- Construction and transportation sets
- Puzzles, snap together blocks
- Collections and other smaller objects to sort by length, width, height, shape, color, smell, quantity, and other features
- Costumes and dress-up clothes
- Dolls with accessories
- Puppets and small puppet stages
- A variety of non-toxic and washable art supplies such as crayons, paint, markers, preschool-sized scissors, modeling clay and playdough
- Picture books with longer stories and more detailed pictures
- Large and small balls for kicking and throwing/catching, ride-on equipment including tricycles, wagons and wheelbarrows, tunnels, taller climbers with soft material underneath, plastic bats and balls, plastic bowling pins

Sleep in Heavenly Peace

There are many families in Florida struggling to provide a safe home, nutritious food, clothing and toys for their children. Some of these families do not have enough furniture and their children may not have a bed to sleep in or even a mattress and pillow to use. If your family is in need of beds for your children or you know of a family in need, contact [Sleep in Heavenly Peace](#). This organization provides beds, mattresses, sheets and pillows to families with children who do not have beds. Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a non-profit organization that partners with other organizations to build wooden bunk beds for children in need. They build and assemble the beds at the homes of families and provide a mattress, pillow and bedding for each bed. Sleep in Heavenly Peace has organizations located in Pensacola, Panama City Beach, Tallahassee, Daytona Beach, Orlando, Tampa, Deland, Ft. Myers, Jacksonville, West Palm Beach and Miami. They are willing to travel to other cities and towns to offer their services to families in need.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Inc.

www.SHPbeds.org

@SHPbeds

Toll Free 1-844-432-BEDS

Visit SHPbeds.org

Contact us for information about a

SHP Chapter near you!



Step Up For Students Scholarships

Not all students learn in the same way. Some may need a different learning environment, while others may need additional resources. That's why Step Up For Students exists: to give Florida school children who need it most, the learning options that work best for them.

Step Up For Students, a state-approved nonprofit scholarship funding organization, administers five different scholarship programs for Florida's schoolchildren: [The Florida Tax Credit](#) and [Family Empowerment Scholarship](#) for lower-income families, the [Gardiner Scholarship](#) for children who have special needs, the [Hope Scholarship](#) for children are victims of bullying and the [Reading Scholarship Accounts](#) for public school students in grades three through five who struggle with reading.

The Florida Tax Credit and Family Empowerment Scholarships are income based, applications will begin being accepted for [new](#) students for the 2020-21 school year in early March 2020. The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship renewal families, who have priority, should expect applications to open in January 2020.

Visit www.StepUpForStudents.org to sign up for the income-based scholarship interest list and to learn more about the Gardiner, Hope and Reading Scholarships, including latest application information for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years.

Resources for Parents of Preschoolers

Spending time interacting with your child is important to your child's healthy development. Because most families are so busy, it is important to find ways to support your child's learning that doesn't take a lot of time and is available at no cost. The resources listed below will help you find ways to make the most of the time you have with your child. Many of the activities can be used as you go about your daily routines such as bathing your child, cooking a meal or riding in a car or on the bus.

First Teacher Books: Your child's learning and development starts at home. You are your child's first teacher. Your child's development of values, learning skills and social skills begins at birth. The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards will [help you support your child's learning and development from birth to age five](http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/families.html). These resources will help you understand more about your child's development and find activities and information to use with your child. This resource and many more are available at <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/families.html>.

Ready Freddy Calendar: This calendar provides fun activities for families to support children's learning at home and preparing for kindergarten. Visit <http://bit.ly/ReadyFreddyCalendar> to download a copy.

Preparing Children for Transition to Kindergarten: This site shares some ideas of things you can do to prepare both you and your child for kindergarten. For more information visit <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/transitioning-to-kindergarten>.

Give the Gift of Time



This holiday season, think about giving your children the gift of time. A gift of time provides you and your child with quality experiences and memories that can last a lifetime! Every year children receive gifts that they play with for only a few days or maybe even a few weeks. They quickly lose interest in these gifts and want something different. Gifting time with your child will strengthen your relationship and it can save you money! Here is a list of ways to gift time to your child based on their age.

Birth to One-Year-Old Ideas:

- Play Peek-A-Boo
- Sing songs
- Play with a ball
- Look at pictures of family members
- Play with soft blocks
- Visit a local park or farm
- Go on a picnic
- Read a book together
- Create activities that use their senses (touch soft or rough items, smell different scents, taste different foods, listen to different sounds)
- Explore a local beach, lake, river or pond
- Play with bubbles

Two-, Three- and Four-Year-Old Ideas:

- Listen to different types of music
- Dance or move to music
- Sing songs or say a nursery rhyme
- Play a game together
- Visit a zoo, amusement park, or museum
- Watch a movie together
- Make a tent/fort with sheets or blankets and pretend to be camping
- Visit a local park or farm
- Go to the grocery store and look for different colors, shapes and sizes of fruits and vegetables
- Read a book together
- Plant a garden or flowers

Make Every Child Count



2020 is the **Year of the Census**. In the last census in 2010, an estimated 5 percent of children under the age of 5 were not counted. Data from the census is used to allocate funds for programs such as food stamps (also called the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program or SNAP), the National School Lunch Program, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). If all children are not counted in the census, these programs may not get the funds they need to support all of the families with young children. Make sure your children are counted by participating in the census!

The census counts everyone where they live and sleep most of the time. If a child spends equal amounts of time between two homes, the child is counted in the home where they stayed on April 1, 2020, Census Day. If you live in a home with extended family, make sure they include you and your children on their census form. If you have a newborn who is still in the hospital on April 1, 2020, your newborn should still be counted on your census form.

The census counts all people living or staying at an address, not just the person or family who owns the property. If you have a child living in a place where children aren't allowed (such as a senior citizen's apartment or in a place where the lease only allows a certain number of people and your family exceeds that number) you still include all children. The Census Bureau is required by law to keep all information **confidential** and is not allowed to share your information. The Census Bureau will never share information with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, local law enforcement agencies or allow the information to be used to determine eligibility for government benefits.

The census form takes about 10 minutes to complete. Each home will receive an **invitation to fill out a census** form and you can choose to fill it out online, over the phone or on paper at a time that works best for you. You can even respond on your mobile device. Take this time to have an impact on your local community by participating in the census. You may help your community get a new school, fire department or health clinic because your family counts!

Special Dates in December



Dec. 2 Special Education Day
Dec. 7 Pearl Harbor Day
Dec. 9 Homemade Gift Day

Dec. 10 Nobel Prize Day
Dec. 13 Violin Day
Dec. 14 Deck the Halls Day

Dec. 20 Go Caroling Day
Dec. 25 Christmas Day
Dec. 31 New Year's Eve Day

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