

HEALTH BRIEFS

MATCHING EFFORT TO ABILITY CREATES 'CAN-DO' KIDS

HOUSTON — Encouraging "couch potatoes" to pace themselves when participating in sports can help change "I can't" attitudes into "I can." "Out-of-shape kids tend to tire quickly," said Dr. Marta Fiorotto of the USDA's Children Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. This limits skill development, which can increase frustration and lead to discouragement. Discouraged kids often lose interest and quit trying. On the other hand, kids who pace themselves stay on a positive cycle. "Matching effort to ability lets kids concentrate on learning basic skills and having fun. Fun keeps them playing longer, which leads to improved fitness levels, a more positive self-image and a better attitude in general," she said. Parents can teach their children how to pace themselves. "Encourage your children to talk to you when you walk or bike together. If they can't keep up a conversation, slow down. If they can sing, they're not working hard enough, so pick up the pace," Fiorotto said. Over time, children will be able to play longer before tiring. Fiorotto recommends that children engage in some form of vigorous activity at least 20 minutes three to five times per week. Swimming, rollerblading, biking and dancing can help build fitness levels. "Fitness benefits children both physically and mentally. And, because active kids tend to stay active as adults, those benefits can last a lifetime," Fiorotto said.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SIGNS OF HUFFING

HOUSTON — Parents who suspect their child is "huffing" should intervene as soon as possible. Huffing is a potentially deadly form of inhalant abuse in which intoxicating vapors or fumes are inhaled to get a quick "high." Everyday products like spray paint, cooking spray, air freshener and butane can be sprayed into cans and small plastic bags or onto clothing so the concentrated vapors can be huffed or inhaled. Chemicals found in spray cans of whipped cream can also be huffed. "This is a dangerous practice, because the chemicals can trigger irregular heart rhythms," said Dr. Nancy Neff, assistant professor of family and community medicine at Houston's Baylor College of Medicine. Clues that your child might be huffing include an unusual breath odor or chemical odor on clothes; a drunken or dizzy appearance; slurred or disoriented speech; chronic runny nose and red eyes; mood changes (anxiety, excitability, irritability, or lethargy); and frequent sniffing of clothing. If your child has these symptoms, he or she is at risk of a heart attack, so consult your primary-care doctor as soon as possible. If your child faints or loses consciousness, call 911. Perform CPR if the child has no pulse. Long-term treatment usually requires enrollment in a 12-step drug-abuse program.

TIPS HELP PARENTS SURVIVE 'PICKY' TIMES WITH TODDLERS

HOUSTON — Avoiding unfamiliar objects is not unusual behavior for toddlers. But, when it comes to eating, having a picky child can send parents up the wall. "Because parents know how important nutrition is, they often resort to bribery or end up becoming a short order cook just to get a picky child to eat. But, these patterns do not help anyone," said Dr. Debby Demory-Luce, a registered dietitian with the USDA's Children Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine. Demory-Luce believes that parental responsibility ends with the serving of nutritious foods. "Parent's can't make their children eat. Children must do that for themselves," she said. Instead, she advises desensitizing fussy eaters to one new food at a time. Place small, one- or two-bite portions on their plates, next to more familiar ones, for several days in a row. Then be patient and avoid making any comment on whether the food is eaten or not. It's not unusual for it take up to 10 exposures before a new food is even sampled. Once it is, begin serving it on a regular basis and go on the next new food. A regular schedule for meals and snacks can also help. New foods seem most attractive when a child is hungry, so avoid offering snacks close to mealtimes. To further increase children's interest in food, involve them in meal preparation. And, of course, don't forget to be a good role model.

Facial exercise can help Bell's Palsy

Rebecca J. Al-Nakhli
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Dear Rebecca: Several months ago, I was diagnosed with Bell's Palsy. Initially, my eye would not close and I was paralyzed on one side of my face.

The paralysis has gone now, but that side of my face is not the same as before.

I recently read your article about facial exercises and was wondering if you could help me.

Dorothy Smith,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Dorothy: The condition you described is affecting more and more people. Bell's Palsy is a neuritis of a facial nerve.

The doctors think it is caused by infection and compression of the swollen

nerve as it passes through a tiny opening in the skull below the ear. It is often caused by a draft of cold air during sleep that strikes the exposed face near the ear.

The palsy is usually experienced the day before the visual signs by a vague pain below the ear.

The following day you cannot close the eye on that side and within hours there is a complete paralysis on one side of the face, with a droop of the corner of the mouth, which is pulled over to one side and an inability to raise the forehead.

This can last from days to months.

For patients with severe damage to the facial nerve, there may be a residual weakness in the closing of

the affected eye and a slight droop of the corner of the mouth for many years.

I also experienced Bell's Palsy, so I understand what you are going through.

For me after the paralysis was over, my face and neck muscles were very weak.

My doctor did not have a solution to my problem, so I used my Appearance Therapy background, and came up with a series of facial exercises that strengthened my sagging muscles.

At my Appearance Therapy Center, we have classes for the sagging elongating muscles of the face and neck. We call it, "Turning Back the Hands of Time."

The course is an eight-week session of regaining mobility, lifting sagging

muscles and eventually looking five to 10 years younger. Your condition could be greatly improved by taking the facial exercise course and learning how to maintain your program at home to keep your muscles strengthened.

Since our faces are our calling cards, I feel we should put a lot of effort into exercising our facial muscles. But, remember, they should be done under the direction of a trained specialist to prevent injury.

Rebecca Al-Nakhli is an Appearance Therapist and founder of Kalajee Int'l Appearance Therapy Centers. Questions or comments? E-mail her at kalajee@kalajee.com or visit www.kalajee.com.

Abortion

(Continued from Page 15)

have to know which bush to boil together, and if the woman just get pregnant this will help to wash out the baby," she said.

Thomas said that it is mainly teenagers who come to her for this type of treatment. "Sometimes the girls get pregnant while in school, and the mothers won't let them keep the baby and so the mothers themselves bring them here to me," she said.

Reports indicate that 13 cases of infanticide were recorded in 1995.

Between 1990 and 1995 the figure was 35. Figures for the years following are not available, but some people argue that the number of reports of babies being found abandoned or dead indicates a significant increase.

There are also other cases in which mothers give birth and walk away from the hospital leaving their newborn behind.

A nurse who works at a counselling organization said she has been receiving a lot of calls recently, especially from young girls seeking abortions. She, too, is concerned that many women go to unqualified persons who are willing to do this procedure at a much cheaper cost than a gynecologist. The untrained person, she said, may charge \$100 while a gynecologist or obstetrician will charge \$300.

The nurse, who requested anonymity, said the equipment used by these "unauthorized" persons usually results in the woman getting infections.

"When I used to work at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital,

many young women came to the hospital after they developed serious medical complications from having an abortion done by these untrained persons," she said. "Sometimes they die."

One gynecologist said he performs up to five abortions per month at a cost of more than \$270 each. "I don't

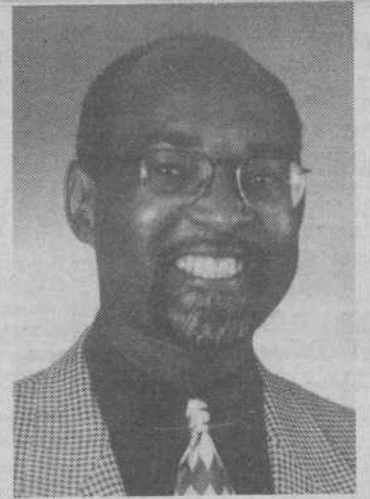
openly advertise it as one of the services which I provide but most people know that gynecologists do these things, and so they will come here to me," he said. Attorney Antoinette Haughton feels it is time that the government does something about legalizing abortions.

"Many women are put at

risk when the state does not come forth and deal with an issue like this," she said. However, Haughton said that it is not a simple task when there are so many groups lobbying against legalized abortions. "Nothing will be done about it for now," she said. "The society is too hypocritical."

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