



Patient Newsletter

July/August 2009

Dear Leann,

I know that it can be frustrating when I am out of the office and not available for patients. Although I do have extensive office hours, there are times that I am not available. One of the main reasons I am out of the office is for continuing medical education. Not only is it required that physicians participate in conferences and lectures, I believe that my attendance at these events make me a better pediatrician.

Here are examples of recent events I participated in:

On Friday May 1, I was out of the office for the day attending a medical conference at Fenway Park in Boston. The faculty at the conference were experts in sports medicine including a neurosurgeon from Children's Hospital Boston, a member from the board of the third international Concussion in Sport Conference who co-authored the international recommendations on treating sport related concussions, and the Pittsburgh Steelers team physician. One of the points that they reinforced was the need for aggressive treatment of concussion in children and adolescents, with gradual return to activity only when completely free of symptoms. These are recommendations that I will follow when treating any of my patients who have had a concussion.

On Wednesday May 13, I was out of the office so I could attend the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics annual meeting. The educational aspect of the event was focused on screening for and treating adolescent risky behaviors and addressed a wide range of topics including depression, eating disorders, sexual behavior, and particular challenges for gay and lesbian teens. The meeting reinforced in me the unique needs and challenges of adolescents and gave me some new tools to help them. I spend some time alone talking to teens at all of their routine physicals as well as at most sick visits to give me an opportunity to address some of these complicated issues with them.

As you know, when I am unavailable, there is always a back-up doctor available to, at the very least, speak with you on the phone to assess if

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your child's illness should be evaluated right away or, perhaps, could wait until I am back in the office. During normal business hours, a receptionist is always available at our main number (508-747-8277) to schedule routine appointments and help families with other administrative matters.

Zicam

Even over the counter medications, or herbal products, can cause harm. On June 16, 2009 the [FDA issued a warning](#) that "Zicam" nasal cold remedies can lead to permanent loss of the sense of smell and taste. The FDA has received over 130 complaints about the products and loss of smell or taste. The active ingredient in the product is zinc and since it is a natural or herbal remedy the company did not need FDA approval or conduct the type of clinical studies that would be necessary to receive FDA approval for a drug. The products have been removed from the market but you should be aware that there are other zinc containing cold remedies (tablets and oral lozenges) that claim to help relieve cold symptoms but have not been tested and could pose the same health risks. If you have any questions feel free to give me a call at the office.

Fireworks Safety



Fireworks can result in severe burns, scars and disfigurement that can last a lifetime. Fireworks that are often thought to be safe, such as sparklers, can reach temperatures above 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, and can burn users and bystanders.

Families should attend community fireworks displays run by professionals rather than using fireworks at home.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends prohibiting public sale of all fireworks, including those by mail or the Internet.

(Courtesy of the AAP)

White Coats



The long white lab coat has been a staple of the traditional physicians' wardrobe for years in this country, but this tradition has been called into question recently. The American Medical Association (AMA) debated a resolution at its annual meeting to encourage hospitals to ban white coats. The fear is that the coats (especially the long sleeves) can become contaminated with

bacteria which can then be spread from patient to patient. Those who are in favor of the ban think that doctors should only wear short sleeve shirts and no ties in order to minimize the risk of spreading bacteria. However this does not address the issue of other objects (stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, etc.) which may also contribute to cross contamination. Unfortunately, many studies have shown that doctors are unreliable about hand washing and this lack of hand hygiene probably contributes to cross contamination more than any objects.

I wear a white coat at the office because studies have shown that children and parents find it easier to discuss difficult subjects with a doctor in a white coat. It symbolizes not only the training and experience of the physician, but also the commitment to treat difficult subjects with respect,

privacy, and non-judgmental professional detachment. I do have some children in the practice who have had bad experiences with other professionals in white coats and I am always willing to leave the coat behind before seeing these patients. If you have any concerns or feel your child has some white-coat anxiety please let me know so that I can remove my coat prior to any appointment with your child.

Sincerely,



Dr. Terence McAllister
Performance Pediatrics

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