

Staying healthy this school year

WORKPLACE

By **Melissa Essig, M.D.**

Starting kindergarten and first grade is an exciting time for children.

It's also an important time for parents to help them start the school year on the right foot and take precautions to stay healthy.

A physical performed by your child's physician is recommended before the beginning of the school year. The state of Indiana also requires school children to be adequately immunized against a variety of diseases such as Hepatitis A, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, chicken pox, polio and hepatitis B. Most of these immunizations require a series of shots that your child most likely began receiving when he or she was an infant.

Schools do require proof of immunizations, signed off by your child's physician. Indiana code states that a child is not permitted to attend school beyond the first day without furnishing a written record, unless the school gives a waiver (for a period not to exceed 20 days); or the local health department or a physician determines that the child's immunizations have been delayed due to extreme circumstances and that the required immunizations will not be completed by the first day of school (in this case the parent must furnish a written statement and a time schedule

approved by a physician or health department); or a medical or religious exemption is on file with the school.

Even with immunization requirements and other precautions, schools can be breeding grounds for germs. As a new student being exposed to bacteria and viruses they may not be used to, your child's immune system will need to work hard to keep him or her healthy. Good nutrition, exercise and plenty of sleep each night will help keep their body strong.

The start of a new school year is also an excellent time for you and your child to review proper hand hygiene techniques that can protect your child from germs that can make him or her sick. Thorough hand-washing on a regular basis is one of the most important things a person can do to stay healthy year-round. Here's to a happy and healthy school year!



Dr. Melissa Essig is with Danville Pediatrics, part of the Hendricks Regional Health Medical Group. Their offices are located at 2013 E. Main Street, Danville. For an appointment call (317) 745-7337. For more information, visit danvillepeds.com.



Plastic surgery and cancer

ASK THE EXPERT

What advice would you give to someone considering reconstructive surgery after/during cancer treatment?

I want my patients to know that breast reconstruction, though elective, is absolutely not vanity. It is protection of a woman's self-image. Though I consider aesthetics and a beautiful final result to be very important, breast reconstruction should not be confused with "cosmetic surgery."

How do I know if I'm a good candidate for breast reconstruction?

There are many ways breast reconstruction can be done, and most often, we can find an option to fit the patient. However, some health issues such as smoking, obesity and diabetes can compromise the final result. I ask that my patients be honest and work with me to lessen the effect of these health problems.

When will I be able to return to normal activities such as driving and working?

Every case is different, but I usually recommend taking two to four weeks off work

after the initial reconstructive surgery. Most other "touch up" surgeries are outpatient and do not require significant time off.

Will reconstruction interfere with chemotherapy or radiation therapy?

I pride myself on working closely with my colleagues in medical, surgical and radiation oncology to determine a plan that fits the patient's treatment plan. Sometimes that involves compromises, but it's important to never negatively affect what needs to be done to treat cancer.

Curious if a health myth is true? Interested in learning the how's and why's of medicine? Email questions to suburbspr@iuhealth.org to have your question featured in this column and answered by one of the highly skilled clinicians at IU Health West Hospital.



Ivan Hadad, MD, is a plastic surgeon at Indiana University Health West Hospital with a broad range of experience, including breast reductions, body contouring after weight loss, skin cancer removal and reconstruction, surgery to treat migraine headaches, and reconstruction after trauma.

Camp prepares Avon's newest learners for success

By Berkley Rios

Earlier this summer, children in Avon got a jump start on kindergarten, thanks to a collaboration aimed at helping at-risk preschoolers transition successfully into school.

For the seventh year in a row, Indiana University Health West Hospital and Avon Community Schools hosted Kindergarten Countdown Camp, a free, four week summer program designed to build and strengthen skills children will need throughout their education.

One parent, Maria Cruz, was especially grateful for the help her daughter, Melina, received throughout the camp.

Like many incoming kindergartners, Melina struggled with writing her name, learning shapes and socializing. She lacked confidence and would often respond with "I can't" when asked to try something new.

After Melina started camp, her mom saw gradual positive change. She started talking about new friends, what she learned in school and how much she loved practicing her name. In fact, Melina started writing her name everywhere, and was even caught writing her name on the walls of her room.

"I'm so glad Melina was able to participate in

this program," said Cruz. "When we used to talk about kindergarten, she was so scared. She didn't want to go to school. After her first few days in camp, I saw her start to open up and realize how fun learning can be."

The ability to introduce the school environment in a fun and casual setting was exactly what IU Health West Hospital had in mind when the program began.

"When it comes to a child's education, we recognize the importance of starting off on the right foot," said Doug Puckett, president of IU Health West Hospital. "The classroom should be a fun learning experience, and we're ex-

cited to bring that to these students."

IU Health West employees pledged more than 150 volunteer hours during camp, helping with basic classroom activities such as reading, facilitating small group activities and spending individual time with children who needed more assistance acclimating to the classroom. In addition to volunteering time, IU Health West Hospital provided a book to every child, on every day of camp.

This fall, Melina will attend River Birch Elementary, where she'll meet new friends, learn new things and be prepared to start her education off on the right foot.

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