A Special Issue On Health Education

Health education is vital in child care, and it's important in Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, especially this spring—with programs featuring a visit to the dentist, sports, exercises, and healthy foods.

Feeling Good — Inside and Out
Helping children learn about health education begins with helping them feel good about themselves on the inside. When children feel good about who they are, they are more likely to take care of their bodies. Whether Mister Rogers says it or sings it, he continually offers children the warm message of “You are special.”

Children need to feel good about themselves on the outside, too. Fred Rogers’ songs “Everybody’s Fancy” and “Everything Grows Together” help children appreciate their bodies and how they grow.

Modeling Healthy Habits
As with most things, attitudes about health care are more “caught than taught.” Children learn best from example, and they can be encouraged to think about health and safety issues in their own lives when they see Mister Rogers brush and floss his teeth, wash his hands, choose healthy foods, and wear safety gear when biking or skating.

A frequent visitor this spring is Neighborhood exercise teacher Marilyn Barnett who leads Mister Rogers through simple movements, inviting children who are watching in a child-care home or center to join in. Daily swimming is part of Fred Rogers’ own routine, and he often includes exercising on programs to help children with their physical development, coordination, listening skills, rhythm, and general health.

Enjoying exercises with Marilyn Barnett, Mister Rogers helps children know that physical activity can be an important part of being healthy and feeling good.

Health Care Professionals
As a pioneer in using television for medical “field trips,” Fred Rogers has helped children be prepared for those potentially scary experiences. A visit to the dentist is featured this spring on program #1629, scheduled for May 4. The Neighborhood series also includes a visit to the pediatrician, the emergency room (helping children deal with x-rays and stitches), and an ambulance.

When Mister Rogers reassuringly takes children through medical experiences, he asks the health care professionals to explain procedures and equipment. As in the message of his Neighborhood song, “I Like To Be Told,” he lets children know that whatever is mentionable can be more manageable.

I like to be told
If it's going to hurt,
If it's going to be hard,
If it's not going to hurt...

I trust you more and more each time
That I'm finding those things to be true.
From the song, “I Like To Be Told”

Seeing that their television friend, Mister Rogers, has a warm relationship with doctors, nurses, dentists, and paramedics with whom he visits, children can come to think of these “community helpers” as caring extensions of the family.

Along with medical “field trips,” Mister Rogers often suggests play activities about medical caregivers and their work. Through play, children can feel more in control and less helpless, and therefore, better able to manage when they’re being examined by the doctor or dentist.

Whether indoors, out-of-doors, or on field trips, Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood gives special attention to presenting health care messages in ways that young children can understand and use. We hope that you, as a child care provider, will find that these ideas help you open doors to your own discussions and activities with the children in your care.

An Offer For Child Care Providers
For a free booklet on GOING TO THE DENTIST, send a self-addressed stamped business-size envelope to Family Communications, Dept. CC, 4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Write to the same address for a form offering a 25% discount for other highly-acclaimed items by Fred Rogers, including the books: GOING TO THE DOCTOR, GOING TO THE DENTIST, and GOING TO THE HOSPITAL.
Dear Parents and Providers,

There are certain obvious things that television can do for children’s health education. By example, people on television can eat healthful foods and go to doctors for regular checkups. They can avoid drugs and dangers. We on television can set a style for good health care.

That’s simple and rather obvious, but there is something else that may not be so obvious which television people can help our society to communicate...and that is the value of being human — the worthwhileness of each human being. I believe that the basic health education lies in people caring enough about who they are that they’ll want to take care of themselves.

If the goal is for people to eat the right food, get the proper exercise, seek regular check-ups, and avoid cigarettes and drugs, we must help those people feel that they’re really worth taking care of. This kind of help is education, and it must begin early in life — very early! Babies are ready to receive all kinds of clues as to whether or not they should make the effort to live. And the clues come from the person who gives them their primary care. The essential feelings about self-worth have their deepest roots in infancy.

Children who are tenderly cared for can, little by little, begin to participate in their own care. At first they begin by sucking hard enough so that they’ll get enough milk to keep alive. Later they learn to feed themselves, to brush their teeth, and to care for other needs. They take increasing responsibility for the care of their own body, growing slowly but steadily in the conviction that they are worth taking care of.

Have you ever noticed how carefully you drive when you’re convinced of somebody’s love for you? Have you ever noticed what good care you take of yourself when you’re about to do something that you feel is very important?

When people want to take care of themselves, they will. They’ll find the resources: the clinics and all the preventive care which our country offers.

There are no short-cuts for people’s responsibility for their own health. It won’t come any other way. It must begin with the baby and the available loving adult who consistently communicates that baby’s worth to him or her. And little by little that baby grows and takes over more and more of his or her own care, with the support of family, friends, neighbors, child care providers, teachers, and society — he or she becomes a caring person: one who has the capacity of being the available loving adult to the next generation.

Sincerely,

Fred Rogers
A Page For Parents

How can parents help children learn to take responsibility for their own health care? You’ve already begun that — right from the start — with all the care you have given: feeding, diapering, holding, cuddling, talking, and listening. Over the years, you’ve given your children many ways to know you love him or her and that the world is a caring and predictable place. These things lay the foundation for children to learn to take care of their own health.

Here are some ideas to help you build on that foundation as your child grows:

Ways To Say “I Love You”
Find lots of ways to let your child know that you love and value him or her.

- Take the time to hold or cuddle your child, or sit close and let your child know how much you care. Bedtime is often a good time for this kind of closeness because it helps children settle down for sleep.
- Say “I love you.” Children need to hear that out loud.
- Set aside a little time every day for each of your children. You can read a book together, play a game, or sit and talk. Sometimes you can say “I care about you” just by being nearby while your child is playing.
- All children need guidance from time to time. When you handle discipline in a positive way and give encouragement for things well done, you’re helping them learn what you expect in a way that helps them listen.

Self-Care
Make healthy self-care a regular part of your family’s daily routine. That can help to eliminate struggles because children know what is expected. Set up routines for bathing, hand-washing, tooth-brushing, and hair-washing, and try to make them enjoyable for your children.

- Bath time can be a time for water play with plastic toys or sponge blocks, for singing songs together, or for telling stories. If these times are fun and enjoyable, children are more likely to look forward to them.
- Hair-washing can sometimes be scary for children, especially for those who don’t like getting water on their faces. For some children, leaning back in the tub makes it easier to rinse off the shampoo. Other children find that holding a washcloth over their eyes will keep the water and soap out.
- Many pediatricians and dentists suggest that children wash hands for 10 seconds and brush teeth for 2 1/2 to 3 minutes. For fun ways to keep track of the time, use a 3-minute egg-timer, sing a simple song, or say a poem.

Healthy Habits
Model healthy habits yourself. Children learn more from our examples than from what we tell them.

- When you wash your hands before eating or when you brush your teeth after meals, tell your children what you are doing and why it is important to you.
- Make healthy decisions about your own snack foods. When children see that you are selecting fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods for between-meal snacks rather than high-calorie, high-fat foods, they will more likely choose healthy foods for themselves.
- When you drive, bike, or participate in sports, wear a seat belt, bicycle helmet, or other protective gear that you expect your children to wear.

Snacks
Let your children help when you are making healthy snacks. Children are more likely to want to eat healthy food when they are involved in the preparation.

- Children can help scrub vegetables before you cut them into bite-sized pieces. Raw vegetables can be more appealing when children have yogurt, cottage cheese, or a low-fat dressing for dipping.
- For frozen banana pops, let your child cut a peeled banana crosswise with a plastic knife. Put the halves on popsicle sticks, let your child wrap them in waxed paper or plastic wrap, and freeze them overnight.
- Children can mix several kinds of low-sugar cereal with low-salt pretzels in a large bowl and spoon the mixture into small individual containers for take-along snacks.

Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood is produced by Family Communications, Inc., a non-profit company that produces audio, video and print materials designed to encourage communication between children and adults. For more information and a catalog, please write or call: Family Communications, Inc., Dept. CC, 4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213; 412-687-2990.
April 3-7 — “Fun & Games”
Barn Dance by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault. Call out this rollicking dance, and you'll see kids dancing with the cows, chickens, and sheep.

April 10-14 — “When Parents Go to Work”
Who Uses This, photos and text by Margaret Miller. Children and their parents use various tools in a variety of career settings.

April 17-21 — “The Environment”
Anansi the Spider: A Tale for the Ashanti adapted and illustrated by Gerald McDermott. This African legend tells the story of Anansi's six sons and how they get the moon to stay in the sky.

April 24-28 — “Fathers & Music”
Little Nino's Pizzeria written and illustrated by Karen Barbour. Tony's dad, Nino, closes his small pizzeria to open a large restaurant. When he realizes bigger is not better, he sells the new restaurant and reopens the old one.

May 1-5 — “Mouths & Feelings”
Stone Soup adapted and illustrated by Marcia Brown. In this traditional tale, clever soldiers persuade town folk to add carrots and more to the soup made from stones.

May 8-12 — “Growing”
Henry's Baby by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Susan Winter. Henry doesn't feel cool, but when the guys come to his house, his baby brother George proves Henry is as cool as they come. (On program #1635, a young girl reads One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish by Dr. Seuss.)

May 15-19 — “Dress-Up”
Here Comes Henry by Charlotte Pomerantz, illustrated by Nancy Winslow Parker. Irresistible nonsense verse describes Henry with “a back-sack carrying a sticky-smacky for her chicks.”

May 22-26 — “Art”
All the Colors of the Earth written and illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka. Bright illustrations of children from all over the world show them laughing, loving, and glowing with life. (On program #1645, Mister Rogers reads Spot's Baby Sister by Eric Hill and visits with the author-illustrator of the SPOT books.)

May 29-June 2 — “Imaginary Friends”
And to Think that I Saw It on Mulberry Street written and illustrated by Dr. Seuss. Marco tells of the sights he imagines on Mulberry Street.

June 5-9 — “Learning”
Chicken Soup with Rice written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak. Part of The Nutshell Library, this introduction to the months of the year is accompanied by a charming refrain.

June 12-16 — “Up & Down”
Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young, collected by Jack Prelutsky, illustrated by Marc Brown. Exuberant poems good for any day of the year.

June 19-23 — “Then & Now”
The Black Snowman by Phil Mendez, illustrated by Carol Byard. A magical piece of Kente cloth changes an ordinary snowman into a Zulu warrior.

June 26-30 — “Things to Wear”
A New Coat for Anna by Hannah Ziefert, illustrated by Anita Lobel. Follow the making of Anna's coat from the sheep's wool to the tailor's finished product.

Special thanks to Dr. Margaret Kimmel of the University of Pittsburgh School of Library Science for suggesting these books for our newsletter.
Hands-On In Child Care

Hand-Washing
Everything you read or hear about health care in child care says that hand-washing is the single most important measure to stop the spread of disease in child care.

Hand-washing reduces the number of germs on hand surfaces. As a consequence, fewer germs are spread around the environment, and fewer germs are available to be introduced into the body when the hands come in contact with the mouth, nose, eyes, or food.

Key Points to Remember About Hand-Washing
The following information was taken from the NAEYC publication for child care providers, HEALTHY YOUNG CHILDREN, developed in cooperation with several health care organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics.

1) When you wash and how often you wash are more important than what you wash with.
   - Always wash your hands at least:
     - Before eating or handling food
     - Before feeding a child
     - After diapering and toileting
     - After handling or cleaning body fluids (blood, mucus, vomit) and after wiping noses, mouths, bottoms, or sores
     - After handling or feeding pets
     - After playing in dirt or sand outdoors

2) When you wash your hands, the important things are:
   - Use warm running water that drains — not a stoppered sink or container.
   - Use soap, preferably liquid.
   - Rub your hands together for approximately 10 seconds. The friction helps remove the germs. Lather the fronts and backs of hands and wrists, under fingernails, and between the fingers for at least 10 seconds.
   - Rinse hands well under running water until all the soil and soap are gone.
   - Turn off the faucet with a paper towel. If you touch it with clean hands, you will be recontaminated. Ideally, the paper towel should be thrown into a lined, covered trash container that has a foot pedal.
   - Hand lotion should be available for staff to prevent little cuts or cracks where germs can hide.

Helping Children With Hand-Washing
Find fun ways to help children learn about careful hand-washing. For example, you might want to make up a song that lasts about 10 seconds, so children can know how long to rub their hands under the water. Another way is to change the song, “Here we go round the mulberry bush” to: “This is the way we... turn on the water... scrub our hands... turn off the water.”

Hand Games For Children
As children grow from infants to toddlers to preschoolers, they develop a sense of their body and its boundaries. Some of that awareness comes from being cuddled and held, having massages and back rubs. Through those kinds of physical real-life experiences, they come to learn the answer to the question, Where do I begin and end?

That awareness also develops through play. For example, infants learn that they get a different feeling when they play with their own hands or toes than when they play with a rattle or other toys.

Hand-Tracing
Hand-tracing is another activity that helps children learn about their body boundaries. When you run the crayon or marker along the edges of their hands, children can actually feel where their hand ends. For another variation, you could do body-tracing by having children lie down on big paper and trace around their bodies.

Hand and Finger Play
Finger play also helps children begin to understand their body boundaries in a playful way. Many finger plays have another element of fun because they go with music, like the Neighborhood song, “Everything Grows Together” or traditional songs like “Where is Thumbkin?” “Put your Finger in the Air.” When children touch their own fingers, chin, toes, etc., they’re developing a clearer sense of their bodies.

Hand Talking
You can help children learn simple phrases in sign language like:

I Love You
Gold medal Olympic basketball player, Suzie McConnell, shows Mister Rogers a spinning trick with the ball and talks about the satisfaction and discipline involved in doing sports well. Her visit is on program #1604 (scheduled for April 6) in the week on FUN & GAMES.

Mister Rogers asks the dentist about the x-ray machine and other dental equipment on program #1629 (scheduled for May 4) in the week about MOUTHS & FEELINGS. Trips to the doctor and dentist can be more manageable when children know what to expect.

Mister Rogers learns how to make his hands move like a butterfly from pantomimist Motoko Duworin on program #1668 (scheduled for June 21) in the week about THEN & NOW. Pantomime is a fun way for children to have physical exercise while they’re learning another way people can communicate.
How To Use The Broadcast Schedule

The broadcast schedule identifies the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* programs that PBS stations broadcast on specific dates. (Check with your local PBS station to find out if *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* is broadcast on dates different from those shown on this schedule.) The schedule also shows the theme for each week of programs and some of the events occurring in each episode.

The specific episode number (for instance, "#1601" for April 3rd) corresponds to the program description and activities in the *Mister Rogers' Plan & Play Book*. The 370-page *Plan & Play Book* contains easy and appropriate activities for preschoolers. It also contains words to many of the songs from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and a special section with recipes and how-to's.

Copies may be ordered from your local public television station or Family Communications.

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