



Peak asthma season
Why back-to-school
calls for increased care



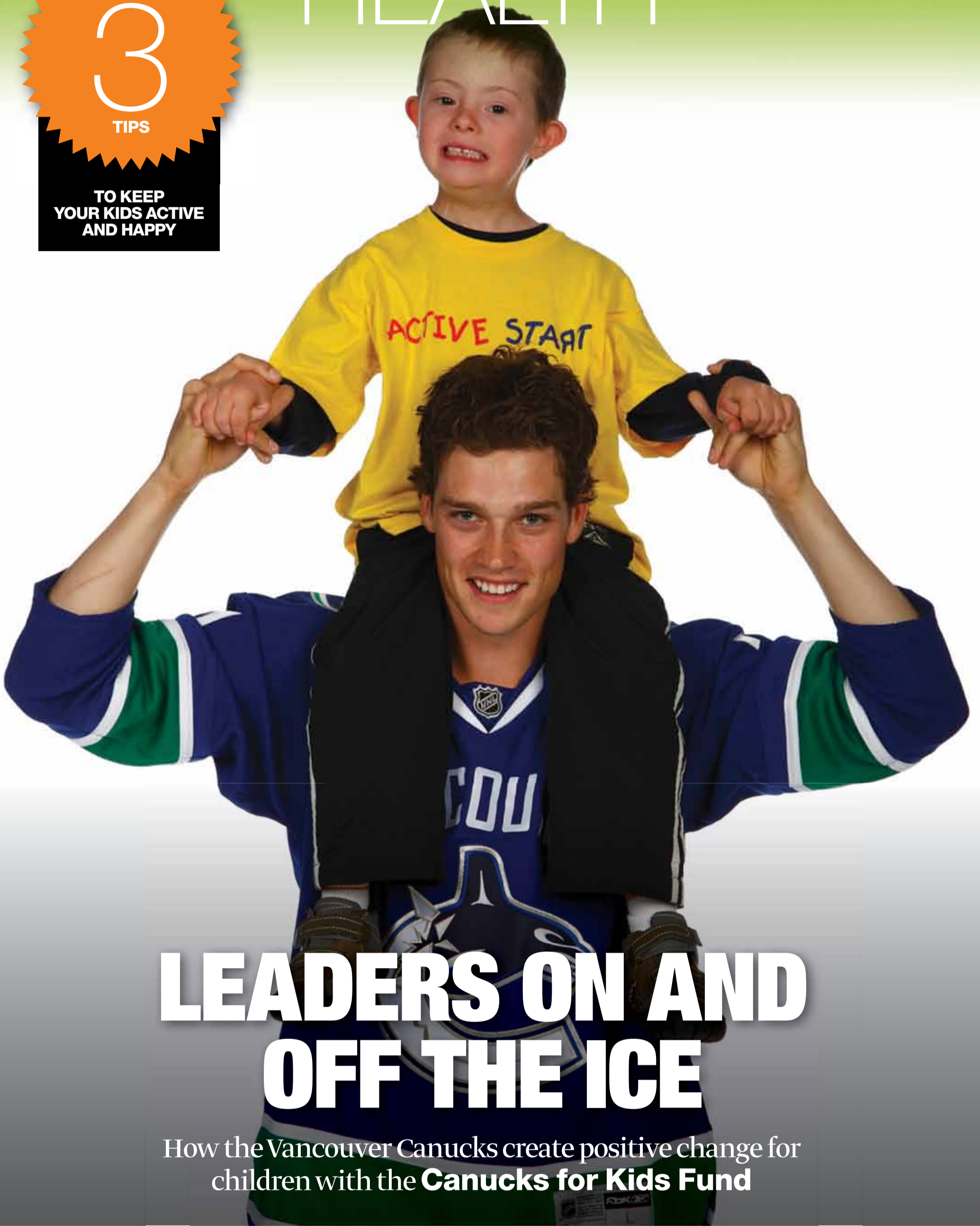
The formative years
Our expert panel
discusses ECE

**MEDIA
PLANET**

September 2011

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

3
TIPS
TO KEEP
YOUR KIDS ACTIVE
AND HAPPY



LEADERS ON AND OFF THE ICE

How the Vancouver Canucks create positive change for children with the **Canucks for Kids Fund**

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CHALLENGES

TIP

1

HEALTHY
EATING HABITS
ARE CREATED
AT A YOUNG
AGE

Healthy habits established in childhood pave the way for life-long vitality. **Parents have the power to create a culture of health to ensure increased quality of life.**

Is your child's health top of mind?

Is your child healthy? Are the kids in your community healthy? How do we think about child health?

When we think about “health” we may be reminded of those acute illnesses that took us to the hospital when we were kids. In the ‘50s and ‘60s, infections were a major focus for pediatricians and the health system. While we continue that battle against infections—especially focusing on their prevention—our modern approach to children’s health must incorporate some new ingredients, especially if we want children to be healthier than we were and are.

Children are not small adults. Researchers including Dr. Paul Wise from Stanford University have pointed out that there are big differences between the pattern of children’s health problems and that of adults. How do these researchers change our thinking?

A connected system

1 First, when we think about “health” we often jump to thinking about “illness.” Acute and serious life-threatening illnesses continue to affect children; however, these are relatively rare compared to the volume seen in adults. Doctors and hospitals can predict, unfortunately, that adults may arrive with serious life threatening adult conditions like heart disease; however it

is far less common for a very seriously ill child to arrive. Professionals who suddenly find themselves caring for an ill child may require support—such as tools, shared care standards and protocols—as well as connections. “Connections” might be a phone consultation, a tele-health consult or, sometimes, a colleague or hospital to refer on to. So what’s the “a ha” moment or “ingredient” for the future of children’s health? Children need a true “system” of care with a high level of connectivity because of the relative rarity of their illnesses. In BC, one of the primary missions of Child Health BC is to create that connectivity so that we realize an integrated and accessible system of care for the children and youth of BC.

It takes a community

2 A second major shift in child health is the fact that the most common health problems of children are now chronic diseases, not the infections of years gone by. Some childhood chronic diseases are unique - congenital heart disease is very different than adult coronary artery disease. Some conditions are familiar: asthma, diabetes, mental health conditions. But does the approach to managing these familiar chronic conditions differ for children? You bet. Children’s body systems sometimes function differently. Parents and



Dr. Maureen O'Donnell MD MSc FRCPC
Executive Director Child Health BC
Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UBC

”

“A second major shift in child health is the fact that the most common health problems for children are now chronic diseases, not the infections of years gone by.”

family must be partners. Youth have told researchers they want meaningful involvement in decision-making. We must consider where kids live their lives—schools, community groups, recreation facilities, sports teams, church groups. A second “a ha” moment or ingredient? The “care” of young people with chronic conditions goes beyond the traditional health-care team. Partnerships between providers and families, youth, teachers, coaches, community centres and others are essential.

A healthy start

3 But rather than talking about where health ends and illness begins, what about where health starts? This is the third and perhaps most important focus for us. Health starts early and is rooted in our homes, schools, communities and environment. Powerful research tells us that opportunities for early experiences shape our development and health as humans. Those early experiences become embedded in our biology and will affect us throughout our lives. A third, final and most important “a ha?” Promoting a healthy start sets the stage for healthy adults of the future.

BC Children's Hospital is an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.”

Taking a stance against obesity

It is no secret that childhood obesity is a problem. In BC, over 200,000 children aged two to 17 years are obese or overweight.

Researchers, health professionals, government officials, parents, and many others are asking—why? The short answer is: “it’s complex.” There are contributing factors that we cannot easily control (i.e. genetics) and others we can control (i.e. nutrition and physical activity). There are factors we don’t fully understand and many we may not have realized.

Taking an active stance

What we do know however is that it is time to take action. We cannot allow the consequences of obesity such as type 2 diabetes, depression, and even cancer, permeate the lives of our children. We cannot accept that children today may live shorter lifespans than their parents and grandparents. The responsibility



Shazhan Amed MD FRCPC MSc.PH
Pediatric Endocrinologist,
BC Children's Hospital;

however does not lie with one individual or one sector. Rather, an “all-of-society” approach is necessary to make a measurable impact. There is no question that parents need to be engaged but so do governments, mayors, city plan-

ners, health professionals and administrators, media outlets, private businesses, schools, and early childhood-, before- and after-school programs. An intensive and coordinated approach involving all sectors of a community is critical in achieving positive change.

The formula for success

Where do we begin? Communities can stand behind a common message that clearly demonstrates how to live a healthier lifestyle. The “5-2-1-0 guideline” is a health message that is rooted in evidence and used all over the world to promote physical activity and healthier food choices among children and their families. The message is simple: “enjoy at least five vegetables and fruits per day; power down after no more than two hours of screen time a day; play actively for at least one hour each day; and choose healthy liquids—pick zero sugar sweetened beverages.” All sectors of BC

communities must promote this health message and take action to support children and their families in achieving the “5-2-1-0 guideline” every day. Doctors, teachers, daycare owners, grocery stores, and restaurants - we all have a role to play and the opportunities are endless.

Childhood obesity is a complex problem that requires a complex solution. Collective action across all sectors of the community is necessary to affect transformative change that is sustainable and long lasting. Let’s take on the challenge in our homes and in our communities. Let’s bring people together from all sectors of BC communities to change policy and alter social and physical environments so that the healthy choice is the easy choice for children.

SHAZHAN AMED

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WE RECOMMEND



Leaders on and off the ics
The difference Canucks for Kids make for children in need.

PAGE 7

“We are in a very unique position, having the ability to impact people because of who we are and the high profile nature of our athletes.”

A stance against obesity p. 2
Why expanding waist-lines on the playground are unnecessary—and unhealthy.

Healthy minds and bodies p. 7
Keep an eye out for tell-tale mental health warning signs.

MEDIA PLANET

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“Where do we begin?
Communities can stand behind a common message that clearly demonstrates how to live a healthier lifestyle.”

SHAZHAN AMED

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NEWS

Each September, hospitals experience an influx of children requiring treatment for asthma-related symptoms. **The culprit for the September Asthma Peak? Back-to-school season.**

Fight the September asthma strike

SHOWCASE

In September there is a significant spike in the number of children requiring hospital treatment as a result of asthma attacks which is called the September Asthma Peak.

Determine if your child's school has a medication policy, and where your child's reliever will be kept. Advocate that your child carry their own reliever medication when they are old and capable enough, and provide the school with extra medication, if necessary. Ensure that you share your child's Asthma Action Plan, downloadable from www.asthma.ca with the school. When it comes to your child's health, ensure that everyone should know how to recognize warning signs and how to respond in the case of an emergency. Being pre-

pared means you'll feel a lot better about September too!

A number of factors combine to make September the worst month of the year for asthma hospitalizations in children:

- Germs and colds spreading through schools.
- Temperatures turning cooler.
- An increase in allergens, Ragweed and Mould in the atmosphere.
- The stress of going back-to-school.
- Not taking controller medications throughout the summer because children were "feeling well."

Find out more about managing the triggers of asthma at www.asthma.ca.

COURTESY OF THE ASTHMA SOCIETY OF CANADA
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SCHOOL SAFETY

Cooler temperatures and increased germ exposure can trigger increasingly serious asthma symptoms.

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INSIGHT

CREATING A SAFE-AIR HAVEN IN YOUR HOME



TIPS

Our children spend over nine percent of their lives indoors, and are constantly exposed to a host of contaminants and irritants which can exacerbate asthma and allergy suffering. There are many common sense solutions to maintain a home which will relieve their suffering and symptoms.

Some of the irritant's which can cause stress are dust and particulate contamination, airborne chemicals, high humidity levels, allergens from pets, mould, and poor ventilation.

- Clean the home often and regularly to reduce the dust levels, and prevent dust and debris from coming in from outside.
- Consider installing a heat recovery ventilator (HRV) to allow clean filtered fresh air into the home.
- Maintain your heating and air conditioning system so that it works to peak efficiency and does not produce any by-products such as carbon monoxide.
- Install and maintain a high efficiency filter within the furnace to keep the air clean.
- Your ductwork are the lungs of the home, keep them clean and mould free to maintain low levels of dust and contaminants in the home.
- Maintain humidity levels within the home to Health Canada standards as high humidity can result in mould growth, which can cause upper respiratory stress.
- Control and repair any water leaks in the home to eliminate any growth of mould.
- Use only "green" cleaning products and eliminate chemicals where possible from all cleaners and scents and fresheners in the home.

Question: How can you create a safe, allergen-free haven in your home?

Answer: As time is increasingly spent indoors over the winter months, extra focus is needed to rid dwellings of pollutants and mould.

As fall and winter creep in, windows are shuttered and fans put in storage to help seal in the warmth.



"The entire heating and ventilation system acts as the whole environment system... it's the lungs of the home."

Craig Jobber
President & CEO, Healthy Indoors Partnership

According to Health Canada, we spend close to 90 percent of our time inside; at home, at work and in recreational environments.

Airing it out

The chief concerns about indoor air quality are divided into two groups—biological pollutants such as mould,

bacteria and dust mites, and chemical concerns such as gases and particles that come from combustion appliances, tobacco smoke, household and personal care products, various building materials and outdoor air.

Many of the contaminants have the ability cause negative health conditions, such as respiratory illness and other dis-

FACTS

■ **Attached garages:** These provide a gateway for carbon monoxide and other pollutants located in the garage.

■ **Nearby construction sites and renovation:** Dust, fibreglass, asbestos, and gases including formaldehyde can collect from nearby construction or renovation within your building/home.

■ **Other occupants:** If you live in an apartment building or with roommates—Carbon dioxide (CO₂), to-

bacco smoke, perfume, and body odours can also affect the air quality of your home.

■ **Microbial contaminants:** Damp areas, stagnant water and condensate pans can act as a breeding ground for fungi, bacteria and disease.

■ **Cleaning supplies:** Sanitary supplies include toxic vapours and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) can pose a hazard to your health.

eases.

People with asthma in particular might find the patchwork of bacteria and mould harmful, and make it hard to breathe.

But it doesn't take a pre-existing chronic illness to feel the effects of bad air.

"Higher levels of harmful bacteria and all that, can cause stress to the upper respiratory system," says Jobber.

Humidity is also a concern

According to Health Canada, humidity caused by improper ventilation can also affect your air quality.

The organization advises that keeping the relative humidity in your home below 50 percent in summer and 30 percent in winter. If you're unsure about the humidity in your home, you can purchase a hygrometer (an inexpensive tool available at most hardware stores) to see if you need a de-humidifier.

Air filters often collect dust and contaminants and should be cleaned and replaced as per the manufacturer to make sure the contaminants are not circulating through the house.

If you're tired of coughing and sneezing, take a look at the environment inside your home—you'll be glad you did.

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*Gershwin/Naguwa study

PANEL OF EXPERTS



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Master, Public Administration



Question 1:
How important is it to incorporate early education into a child's first years?

Early education impacts children's cognitive, social and emotional development, and builds a foundation for lifelong learning. Learning happens in the home, in relationships with other humans, in interaction with materials and equipment. Families, early childhood educators, community and the environment all support learning. Quality childcare is early education. When families have access to a variety of services and supports, children have opportunities to be engaged in enriching experiences and this promotes overall development. Quality programs and services have the mandate to support the role of the family in early education.

It is critical. The human brain develops in the early years, and it is by being stimulated adequately and sufficiently before age six that a child will define his or her potential for learning for the rest of his or her life. Missing that opportunity has a life long impact on a person's ability to learn that cannot be recovered later on in life.

Children are developmentally curious about the world they live in. It is important for adults in a child's life to help stimulate and support their inquisitive nature so that the child becomes a lifelong learner. Cognitive development is important to develop language, fine motor and gross motor skills, thinking skills, and creativity. When the child engages in play, he or she uses the imagination in an abstract matter which helps their connection to early literacy, mathematical thinking, and problem solving thereby promoting success in school and life.

Question 2:
What activities can improve a child's mental and physical development?

Take children outside and explore with them. Be genuinely curious, this will develop their curiosity and language. Encourage children to take risks by climbing and jumping and using their whole body. Give your child lots of interesting materials to enhance thinking by constructing and creating. Arrange playdates with other children. Getting along with others is an important skill. Let children play and explore their environment. Limit TV watching and other media. Read together as often as possible. Listen to children; they will amaze you with their eagerness to learn.

There are many, and it is the combination of them that the child needs, but some very important activities include reasoning games and activities (anything where the child has to think and problem-solve, from puzzles to math and science); language and literacy in the early years—it is very important to read to a child often, and to read books that are rich and complex in content. Also speaking to a child with more complex vocabulary, and having conversations with the child, rather than speaking to him or her. For physical development, gross motor activities and sensorial exploration are essential (these goals can easily be met by playing with a child in a playground.)

Children develop rapidly in their early years. Development can be facilitated by providing a stimulating environment and ensuring proper attention is paid to health and nutrition. Mental development can be encouraged through play activities such as singing, listening to inquisitive stories, hands on experiences, puzzles, reading aloud—essentially using all the senses to stimulate learning. To develop physically, children need opportunities to work on their gross and fine motor skills such as climbing, building, drawing, jumping, cutting and push-pull activities that will help with strength, coordination and perception.

Question 3:
What challenges may parents face when incorporating education into their child's early years?

Stress to introduce academic learning at an early age challenges families. Developmental research indicates that fostering strong relationships and engaging in developmentally appropriate play activities is the best model of early education. Working to pay the high costs of housing and food is a challenge that limits family time. The high fees for child care, second only to housing expenses, is a challenge. The shortage of child care spaces in BC is a challenge. The CCCABC and ECEBC formulated a Plan to address these issues for BC's parents http://www.ecebc.ca/news/integrated_project.html

The challenge is choosing an early learning program that encompasses all of these essential elements and that, at the same time, is an avid observer of the child as an individual and follows the child's lead to discover his or her particular interests, and to explore those. Often programs are either only play based or only about learning. There are so many things families can do to enhance a child's development in the early years, like cooking together, reading, walking and playing together, conversing, and playing that are not always possible for families who have to work and get home at dinner time, rushing to get dinner on the table.

Many parents are employed and have limited time to spend with their children. Parents understand the competitive nature of society and want the best for their children, so they use their limited time to focus on making sure that their children acquire all the necessary skills before entering Kindergarten. Children may become frustrated with an overly structured approach. Parents may not realize that by playing with their children, reading stories together, or exploring the local park, they are providing developmentally appropriate and rewarding educational experiences.

KEEP AN EYE OUT!

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www.childhood-obesity-prevention.org

INSPIRATION

TIP
3
ASK YOUR CHILDREN HOW THEY FEEL DAY TO DAY



DOUBLE THE KINDNESS
Henrik (right) and Daniel Sedin hang out in the Canucks' dressing room area during a charity telethon.
PHOTO: VANCOUVER CANUCKS/ JEFF WINNICK



DON'T MISS!



Michele Kambolis
Vice Chair, BC Mental Health Foundation; Clinical Director, Harbourside Counseling Centre and CHI Kids

Speaking of kids: healthy minds

More common than cancer, mental illness affects everyone—almost 110,000 children in British Columbia alone are, in this moment, suffering needlessly.

Left unchecked, childhood mental illness has far-reaching effects, holding the family hostage with little room for joy. The good news is that intervention can work and with a little support, you can be equipped with the education necessary to help ensure your child's mental health needs are at the forefront.

Be alert to symptoms

While four children in every classroom of 30 will suffer from mental illness, only a quarter of those will receive treatment. Early screening is key, but disorders manifest in many different ways and can be hard to identify. Here are some symptoms to watch for:

- Inability to cope with the demands of daily life;
- Big changes in sleeping or eating patterns;
- Declining school performance;
- Behavioural problems or angry outbursts.
- Physical complaints (headaches/stomachaches);
- School avoidance;
- Inattention, fidgeting or hyperactivity beyond what's normal for their age;
- Excessive fears, anxiety or sadness;
- Thoughts of self harm or suicide;
- Lack of interest in activities or friends;
- Rigid thinking or obsessing about certain topics;
- Fear of gaining weight;
- Abuse of drugs/alcohol.

It's never too early to seek help

Early treatment means a better outcome for your child, so don't hesitate to take your gut feeling seriously. Parents often hope their child will outgrow the problem, but there's no problem too small to be addressed. Start with a call to your family doctor, paediatrician, or community mental health centre. When you meet with your clinician, several factors will help ensure your child receives the right kind of help: be detailed and specific, open about any family history of mental illness and persistent until your concerns are taken seriously.

Finding the right support can be a difficult process and often takes several attempts and a great deal of resolve. If unsure where to go for help, talk to someone you trust who has experience in mental health—for example, a doctor, nurse, social worker, or school counsellor. Here are some local resources to consider:

- C.A.R.T. (Child and Adolescent Response Team) provides urgent response to mental health related crises involving school age children/youth and their families. They also provide short-term therapy, resources, and referral coordination. Tel: 604-874-2300
- F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids' Mental Health provides a mental health orientation guide for teachers and families and information about parent support groups throughout B.C. Tel: 604-878-3400
- Kelty Resource Centre provides mental health and substance use information for children, youth, parents and families with resources, practical tips and multilingual information. Tel: 1-800-665-1822

Established in 1986, the **Canucks for Kids Fund** is passionate about improving children's health and wellness.

Leaders on and off the ice

LEADER TO LEADER

Like its namesake, the Vancouver Canucks, the Canucks for Kids Fund is mad about winning, but in a different sphere—it has an ambitious vision to improve the life of the less fortunate in B.C.



Victor de Bonis
Vice President, Canucks for Kids

"We are in a very unique position, having the ability to impact people because of who we are..."

As Fund Vice President Victor de Bonis says, "We want leaders not just on the ice, but off the ice as well." The Canucks have proved to be leaders in fundraising, roping in its large and enthusiastic fan base to support its good work. Everybody—not just those with deep pockets—has a role to play in this fund raising drive.

A large proportion of the funds are raised through the 50/50 ticket program, where fans purchase three tickets for five dollars, seven for \$10 or 18 for \$20, at the start of the game. A draw is held within the first 10 minutes of the third period of the game, with the winner announced during the game.

It is an undeniably shrewd strategy—tapping into the general feeling of anticipation and excitement at the start of a game—when people feel expansive and are more likely to reach into their pockets.

"It has been very successful," agrees deBonis.

Partnership power

Part of the fund's appeal is that monies raised do not leave the province, so donors feel that they are tending to their own backyard.

"This mandate was established a long time ago, and we have not deviated from it," says de Bonis.

There are no hard and fast rules as to who the beneficiaries are, only that they must "feel right." Still, there are three main beneficiaries—Canuck Autism Network, Canuck Place Children's Hospice and the BC Children's Hospital.

Canuck Place, which has received more than \$23 million from the Fund, of-

fers refuge to suffering families.

More recently, Canucks for Kids Fund has begun supporting families dealing with autism. "Autism is a growing problem in Canada," notes de Bonis. The neurological disorder, now affects one in 150 B.C children and their families. The Fund has granted \$825,000 to the Canucks Autism Network (CAN) in its first two years of operation.

Using their talents wisely

The Fund's motto is simple —"We use our assets to help others", says de Bonis. "We are in a very unique position, having the ability to impact people because of who we are and the high profile nature of our athletes.

"It's not so much that it gives us an advantage, but it does give us a strong opportunity to do more than others might," says de Bonis.

These assets include capitalizing on the players' talents and their star power. Players and management are not just affiliated with the fund exclusively, they are also very active in other charities, he adds, declining to reveal details, explaining that it would not be appropriate to do so.

Plans for the future

Since its establishment, the Canucks for Kids Fund has granted more than \$32 million for charity, but it wants to do more.

"Our plan for the future is simple—we

want to raise more, so as to give more," says de Bonis. As the fund is adamant that it will not take away money from other charities, it is channelling more of its energies to its game night 50/50 draws program.

"We are moving towards implementing electronic processes to our 50/50 programs, to ensure greater transparency. This season, our fans will be able to see how much is in the pot, how much can be won and how much more needs to be raised."

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PROFILE

Canucks Autism Network
■ **Autism can be frightening and isolating for affected families, and the Canucks Autism Network (CAN) is helping them through the provision of high quality recreational, sports, social and vocational development programs. We CAN Be Friends, an in-school program, encourages friendship, empathy and inclusion among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their peers. Seventy B.C schools have registered for this program and all places have been filled.**

CANUCKS AUTISM NETWORK 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

Wise up to your child's inactivity

We all like to think our kids are getting all the fresh air and physical activity that they need to be healthy, happy and, well, children.

But the sad truth is—Canadian kids are woefully inactive. According to the Canadian Health Measures Survey data released this year, a paltry seven percent of Canadian children meet the recommended 60 minutes per day of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity.

A stagnant issue

Modern Canadian kids are not only not

moving enough, they've come to a virtual standstill; the average kid in Canada spends 42 hours a week glued to television, video game and computer screens—as much time as their parents may spend at work.

The consequences

What's the worry? Lots, really. With not enough physical activity and too much sedentary behaviour, kids are now bigger and weaker than they were a generation ago. In fact, currently one in four Canadian youth are overweight.

The health risks of physical inactivity are serious, and include chronic diseases like heart disease, and type-2 diabetes.

And we're not talking about running into problems later in adult life—one in five 15-year olds are already exhibiting high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

But before we write-off the next generation, take heart. The solution is relatively simple; just get kids moving more. Here are some lifestyle tips to take action and reduce health risks:

■ **Get outside:** Kids who play outside after school take an average of 2,000 more steps per day than their housebound friends.

■ **Limit screen time:** The new Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommends limiting screen time to two hours or less per day. Try going "un-

plugged" for certain time periods each day.

■ **Be sporty:** Encourage your child to try a new sport this year. Parks and rec associations often offer inexpensive classes and leagues.

■ **Use active transportation:** Walk, bike or skateboard to school. Use the time to connect with your kids or walk with other families to make it safe and social.

The best part of this prescription for better health is—it's all fun and games—and that's not too hard to swallow.

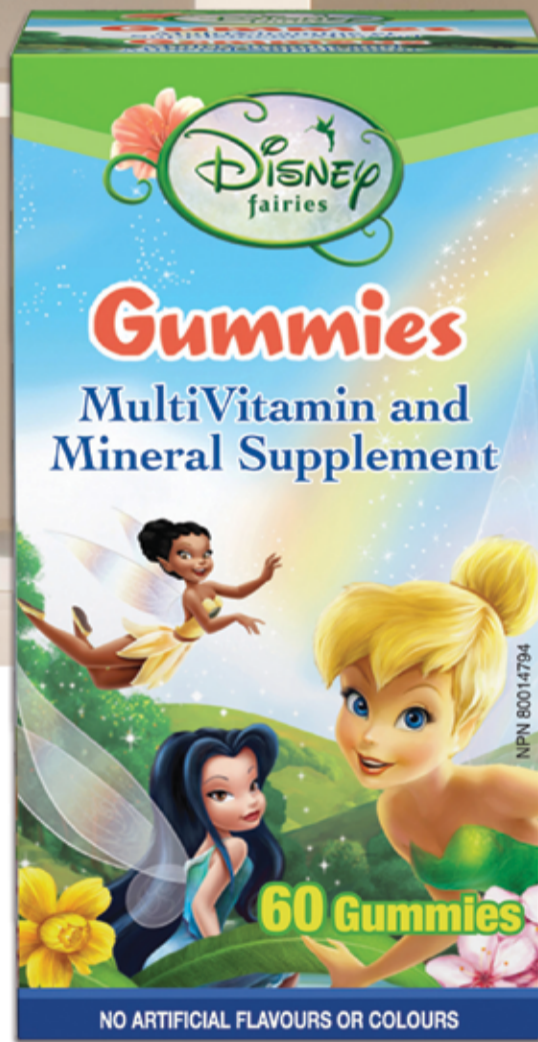
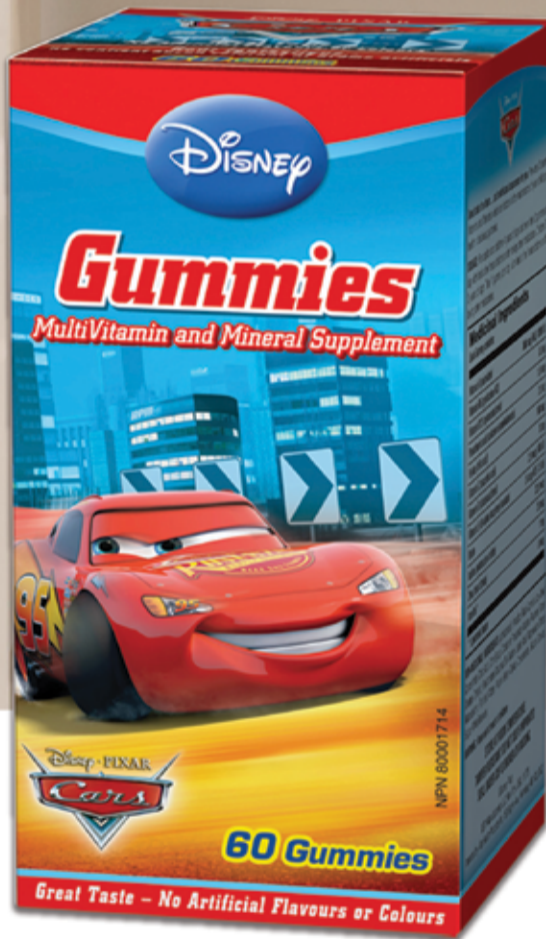
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Vitamins & Minerals for Kids... and the Characters They Love!



New



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For more information about our products, call 1-877-925-8487. As a reminder, discuss the supplements and medicines you take with your health care providers. These products are not suitable for everyone, always read label directions and warnings prior to use.

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