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## Healthnet News v.27:no.3 Fall 2012

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# HEALTHNET NEWS

*A newsletter for public librarians and others interested in consumer health information services*

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## NETNEWS

### *WEST NILE VIRUS PRECAUTIONS.... A GUIDE FOR PARENTS*

What should parents of young children do to protect their children from the dangers of West Nile Virus?

The Kidshealth.org website, designed with separate sections for parents, children, and teens, offers an overview of precautions for parents, at [http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/outdoor/west\\_nile.html#](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/outdoor/west_nile.html#) These guidelines have been recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

In addition to staying indoors “at dusk and dawn, “ and wearing “long-sleeved shirts and long pants” when outdoors, the guidelines advise parents to be sure that damaged door and window screens are repaired, to remove puddles of standing water from their yard, and to spray a DEET containing (30% or less concentration) insect repellent on children’s clothing and sparingly on their skin.

The article at [http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/outdoor/west\\_nile.html#a>About West Nile Virus](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/outdoor/west_nile.html#a>About_West_Nile_Virus) begins with a description of West Nile Virus and its chances of transmission. (“Fewer than 1% of people who are bitten and infected with West Nile virus will become seriously ill.”) It describes the flu-like symptoms those with mild illness experience and the more serious symptoms of severe West Nile Virus infection.

The article briefly discusses diagnosis and supportive treatment for serious cases of the illnesses.

Also, a brief article about West Nile Virus precautions, directed to parents, is part of the American Academy of Pediatrics website at <http://tinyurl.com/9k9v36b>

An article about West Nile Virus, written especially for children, appears on the Kidshealth.org website at [http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/west\\_nile.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/west_nile.html) A children’s version in Spanish is available on the Kidshealth website at [http://kidshealth.org/kid/en\\_espanol/cuerpo/west\\_nile\\_esp.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/en_espanol/cuerpo/west_nile_esp.html) There is an article, in English, especially for teens, at [http://kidshealth.org/teen/infections/bacterial\\_viral/west\\_nile.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/infections/bacterial_viral/west_nile.html)

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<http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>

The editor of each of these online articles about West Nile Virus is Mary L. Gavin, MD, Medical Editor of KidsHealth, a publication of the Nemours Center for Children's Health Media at the Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington Delaware.

Each of the editors and article reviewers of KidsHealth.org is a physician or psychologist from hospitals and medical colleges around the country.

Each of the three segments of the website is available in Spanish as well as English. There is an Educators' section that includes "free health-related lesson plans" and a newsletter for teachers.

In addition to articles about illnesses and general health, the website includes information about school and family life, nutrition, emotions and behavior.

The Teen section of the website provides straightforward, authoritative health guidance for young people. It discusses "emotions and behavior," "growth and development," as well as "medical problems."

#### *"GOOD FOOD ON A TIGHT BUDGET" ....A NEW GUIDE*

It's not hard to convince many families that they should forgo large cups of soda and drink water with meals instead, or that they should select grilled chicken for supper instead of fatty fast food burgers. They understand the importance of selecting healthy, nonfattening food for their families.



However, many of these families, motivated to eat nourishing food and to encourage their children to make healthy nutritional choices, cannot follow healthy guidelines.

They find these food choices to be beyond the reach of their budgets.

To help families looking for economical, nutritious food choices, a new food guide has been published online by the Environmental Working Group, a "not-for-profit organization" that focuses on providing information about "human health and the environment." The Guide specifies which foods "pack the most nutrition for the lowest cost."

Good Food On A Tight Budget at <http://www.ewg.org/goodfood/index.php> describes food that is economical as well as nutritious and among the "least polluted." Its goal is to help families eat nutritious, environmentally-friendly, affordable foods. It offers recommendations for specific fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products, proteins, cooking fats and oils, and spices. Good Food On A Tight Budget is colorful, attractive, and has a minimum of text.

In its research for this new publication, the Environmental Working Group devised a "food ranking system" that selected the "top 100 foods that are healthy, cheap, clean and green."

The Guide strives to help families eat nutritious foods for \$5. to \$6. a day. It encourages home cooking and cooking in large quantities and freezing food in meal-sized portions. It also provides recipes. Among the least expensive sources of protein discovered were roasted turkey and beans.

Among the Environmental Working Group's nutritious food suggestions are ideas for "healthy, affordable" home-prepared school lunches at <http://www.ewg.org/agmag/2012/08/good-food-lunch-boxes/>. The recipes for "Good Food Lunch Boxes" are based on ideas in the new Good Food On A Tight Budget Guide.

The Environmental Working Group previously published the Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce at <http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/> The Shopper's Guide is intended to encourage families to eat many fruits and vegetables while avoiding dangerous exposure to pesticides. The Shopper's Guide lists fruits and vegetables with the highest exposure to pesticides and encourages shoppers to purchase organic versions of these fruits and vegetables. This concern about pesticide exposure was part of the focus of the new Good Food On A Tight Budget Guide.

Information about healthy food choices appear in the Nutrition category of the "Your Child" Resource Guide on the Healthnet website at <http://uchc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=67331&sid=497351>

The American Institute for Cancer Research offers healthy recipes from the AICR Test Kitchen at [http://www.aicr.org/reduce-your-cancer-risk/diet/reduce\\_diet\\_recipes\\_test\\_kitchen.html](http://www.aicr.org/reduce-your-cancer-risk/diet/reduce_diet_recipes_test_kitchen.html)

The American Heart Association publishes "Healthy Foods under \$1 per serving" at [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/HealthierKids/HowtoMakeaHealthyHome/Healthy-Foods-Under-1-Per-Serving\\_UCM\\_303809\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/HealthierKids/HowtoMakeaHealthyHome/Healthy-Foods-Under-1-Per-Serving_UCM_303809_Article.jsp)

The U.S. Dept of Agriculture provides additional nutritious information sources:

10 Tips for Affordable Fruits and Vegetables

[http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-g oups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet9SmartShopping.pdf](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet9SmartShopping.pdf)

Eating Better on a Budget. Ten tips to help you stretch your food dollars

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet16EatingBetterOnABudget.pdf>.

### *SHOULD YOU PARTICIPATE IN A CLINICAL RESEARCH TRIAL?*

The decision to undergo a medical treatment or to participate in a clinical research trial, testing the effectiveness of a new treatment, is an important one. The decision requires a clear understanding of the treatment's risks and benefits.

What if the treatment being considered is in the testing stage?

What if the research plan for the new treatment prevents you from knowing if you will actually receive the medication being tested? Some research participants may be randomly chosen to receive a placebo, "an inactive product that resembles the test product, but without its treatment value," <http://www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials/basics.htm> or to receive a previously approved medication.



*A new clinical trials website....*

The federal government's National Institutes of Health has published a new website, "NIH Clinical Research Trials and You" especially for patients and families at <http://www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials/index.htm>

In consumer-friendly language, it explains how clinical trials are structured, the concepts and stages of research involving patients, the importance of both patient volunteers and healthy volunteers to a study, risks and benefits of participating, questions to ask before volunteering for a study, and your protections as a volunteer.

The website includes videos telling the “personal stories” of the experiences of volunteer patients who have participated in clinical research trials. There are also videos by research scientists and physicians explaining the importance of participating in clinical trials to advance research.

The website offers links to educational resources about clinical trials for children and adults, in both Spanish and English, at <http://www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials/resources.htm>

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Healthnet’s website for health consumers and librarians at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/> provides a Resource Guide to “*Medical Research: What You Need to Know.*” The Resource Guide links to articles and organizations with information about “Clinical Research Trials,” “Understanding the Research Process,” and the “Language of Medicine.”

### *Searching for a clinical trial.....*

The National Institutes of Health new clinical trials website at <http://www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials/findingatrial.htm> provides links to resources that help potential volunteers search for a clinical trial.

Information about completed and ongoing clinical research trials throughout the world appears on the National Institutes of Health [www.Clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.Clinicaltrials.gov) website.

A guide to research trials on cancer treatment is part of the National Cancer Institute website at <http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials>



### *WHAT PRECAUTIONS SHOULD YOU TAKE AT THE PHARMACY?*

Your doctor and pharmacist are not the only people who help to be sure that the medications you receive are safe.

As a health consumer, you have an important role in assuring that the medications that you pick up at the pharmacy are safe and appropriate for you.

There are important steps you, as a patient, need to follow when dropping off a prescription and picking up the medicine dispensed for you at the pharmacy. Also, there is specific information you need to know about the medication’s side effects, dosing instructions, and your doctor’s plan for prescribing the medication.

A Pharmacy Safety: Consumer Fact Sheet published by the National Patient Safety Foundation at <http://www.npsf.org/for-patients-consumers/tools-and-resources-for-patients-and-consumers/pharmacy-safety-consumer-fact-sheet/> offers guidelines for patients about their interactions with their pharmacist.

Among the guidelines are: informing the pharmacist of other medications you take, both prescription and over-the-counter medications, confirming that the pharmacist is aware of any allergies you have, and checking the name, dosage, appearance, and scent of the medication when you receive it. You should be aware of your physician's reason for ordering the medication and the results, and possible side effects you might experience after taking it.

*In an email* to Healthnet librarians, Pharmacist Stefanie C. Nigro,, an Assistant Clinical Professor at the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, advised: "One of the best ways to help optimize medication safety is to use the same pharmacy to fill your prescriptions. This simple action will ensure that your pharmacist can look for important drug interactions and screen for other potential problems. Establishing a personal relationship with your pharmacist will also help ensure your safety."

#### *OTHER MEDICATION RESOURCES.....*

Medicines and You: A Guide for Older Adults, published online at

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm163959.htm>

by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, contains important information for adults of all ages. It reminds health consumers to be aware of possible drug-food interactions, drug-medical condition interactions, and drug-alcohol interactions. Your doctor needs to know of any special diet you follow, in addition to knowing about your medical history and lifestyle, so that new medications and the timing of doses will be relevant to your own health situation.

The DrugDigest database offers a checklist of thirteen facts you should know about each medication you take at

<http://tinyurl.com/ct6akcc>

Among the questions to ask of your physician or pharmacist about each drug are: What if I miss a dose? How long should I take this medication? What are the possible side effects of this medication and what should I do if they appear? When will the medication start working? Should I take the medication with food or without food?

Valuable details about specific medications, their possible side effects, storage recommendations, dietary instructions, and special precautions are published at the National Library of Medicine's Medlineplus website for health consumers at

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html>

You may check possible interactions between medications on the DrugDigest database at

<http://www.drugdigest.org/wps/portal/ddigest>

The DrugDigest database <http://www.drugdigest.org/wps/portal/ddigest> and the PDR Health database at

<http://www.pdrhealth.com/> also provide images of individual medications so that you can compare the appearance of the pill you received with that of the prescribed medication.

The RxList Pill Identifier at <http://www.rxlist.com/pill-identification-tool/article.htm> can help you identify an unknown pill by entering its color, shape, and imprint in search boxes on the website.



## FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following titles are recommended to public libraries and other libraries providing consumer health information services. They are not part of the UCONN Health Center Library collection.

**Raising Resilient Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Strategies for Helping Them Maximize Their Strengths, Cope With Adversity, and Develop a Social Mindset.** Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein. McGraw-Hill, 2012. 269 p. (ISBN 0-07-138522-3 paperback).

How challenging it is to help growing children cope with the difficulties of everyday life: schoolwork, getting along with friends, developing confidence in themselves, communicating effectively with teachers and other adults.

How much more difficult it must be for caring parents to help their children develop these skills when the children must cope with autism spectrum disorders...a condition that is manifest in “difficulty in developing social relations, language problems, very focused interests to [the] exclusion of others, [and a] prefer[ence] .. [for] interact[ing] with objects rather than with people.” These children have great difficulty understanding the viewpoint of others and empathizing with them.

Psychologists Robert Brooks, of the Harvard Medical School faculty, and Sam Goldstein, of the University of Utah faculty, have expanded their series of books about “raising resilient children” to encompass children with autism spectrum disorders. Their recommendations reflect the findings of the more than fifty books they have authored and their “sixty years of combined clinical practice.”

Their books, videos, newsletters, and speeches focus on arming children with the “ability to cope with and overcome everyday adversity” and become increasingly independent.

Combining their experiences with specific families and their children with autism spectrum disorders they have counseled, they present modified examples of a variety of real life experiences. These stories of families’ struggles with their children’s challenges provide a window into their world. The detailed dialogues among the families and the psychologists illustrate effective ways to handle everyday situations.

The authors emphasize the “great importance of supportive early intervention in the lives of children with developmental disorders.” (p.x) But, they state (p.5), this is “not a treatment book with prescribed therapeutic strategies to address Autistic Spectrum Disorders” but instead intended “to help child develop a social resilient mindset.”

The book focuses on eight key “guideposts for raising a social resilient child with autism spectrum disorder.” Among them are teaching and modeling empathy, listening actively to children, “accepting children for who they are,” identifying and nurturing their strengths, and developing a “social conscience.”

This compassionate, down-to-earth book concludes by stating that “Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders are children first.”

Additional information about the authors’ work, their publications, and guiding principles appear on their website at <http://www.raisingresilientkids.com/>

Parenting guidance is available on the Positive Child Rearing section of the “Your Child Resource Guide” on the Healthnet website at <http://uchc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=67331> and the “Mental Health Resource Guide” at <http://uchc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=78575&sid=581910>

**And Still They Bloom. A Family's Journey of Loss and Healing.** Amy Rovere. American Cancer Society, 2012. 41 p. (ISBN 978-1-60443-036-3).

The death of a close family member can be a devastating experience. How much more challenging this event is for children, who lack the experience and perspective of a grieving adult. When a child loses a beloved parent whom she loves and relies on, the future seems especially bleak. They may lack the insight to recognize their feelings of “fear” and “anger” as well as painful grief.

Well-meaning friends and neighbors, adults and children, may respond with hurtful remarks meant to be comforting. (“She’s in a better place now.”) They may hesitate to speak at all to family members, because of their own discomfort in finding the right words to say.

Among the new consumer health books published by the American Cancer Society, **And Still They Bloom. A Family's Journey of Loss and Healing**, is a colorful, comforting picture book designed for elementary school-aged children suffering the loss of a parent.



The book was written by Amy Rovere, a writer and editor for the American Cancer Society who is actively involved in producing books for families dealing with cancer. She experienced the overwhelming loss of her own mother to cancer when she was nine years old.

The book is illustrated with large, expressive paintings by Connecticut artist Joel Spector that convey the family's emotions.

Although grieving the devastating loss of his wife, in this story, Emily and Ben's father is a strong, patient, comforting presence for his ten-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son. He does not hesitate to voice his feelings to his children in a gentle way, “I know it's not fair, Emily. I wish Mom was here, too. As hard as they try, sometimes the doctors can't make cancer go away.” He comforts her: “You're not a bad person for feeling angry [at your mother]. ..Don't be afraid to tell me how you feel.”

To his distraught son's question, “Was it my fault that Mom died?” the children's father responds, “No, Ben. It's no one's fault.” And to Emily, “You can miss her but still feel happy sometimes, too.” He responds reassuringly to the children's underlying concern, “What if you get cancer?”

Their father helps the children honor and remember their mother in concrete ways by writing and drawing and caring for her garden. “Slowly, they both adjusted to life's different rhythm.”

Additional books for children and families about cancer, published by the American Cancer Society, are described on the American Cancer Society website at <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/Bookstore/acs-books-for-children> and at <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/Bookstore/acs-books-for-family> .

**-How to Help Children Through a Parent's Serious Illness.** Revised and Updated. Kathleen McCue with Ron Bonn. St. Martin's Griffin, 2012. 41 p. (ISBN 978-1-60443-036-3).

“Supportive, Practical Advice from a Leading Child Life Specialist.”

Sometimes, in a very difficult situation, one does not have the time or energy to explore and research the best ways to handle that circumstance. But, especially when children are affected, it is important to deal with a tough situation effectively and compassionately.

This very supportive book is a revised and updated edition of Kathleen McCue's guide for parents, designed to provide practical, empathetic guidance to parents and family members caring for a child whose parent is extremely ill. Ms. McCue is a Child Life Specialist at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation who pioneered a children's support center for families directly affected by cancer.

The specific guidance she offers parents, in a comforting, realistic way, reinforces her message to them: Even in this challenging situation, there are things you can do, and say, to help your child cope.

Her book's "first principles," which have not changed since the publication of the first edition, are:

"You must tell your children the truth, however painful" ...although you need not include all the details.

"If you do not tell the truth to your children, they will imagine even worse circumstances." She states: "Being honest does not necessarily mean telling *everything* at once. It means never telling anything but the truth...Children are stronger than you think...Children have a need and right to know what is happening to a gravely ill parent."

Since the 1994 publication of first edition, there has been a proliferation of Internet websites and their use, by children as well as adults, which provide easy access to information, but also the danger of misinformation.

The expanding science of genetics means children's chances of inheriting susceptibility to a parent's illness is more likely to be known. In this revised edition, Ms. McCue also discusses the needs of a single parent dealing with crisis, the increased number of survivors of AIDS and cancer, and a widening interest in complementary medicine.

Her detailed "family stories" in the book are based on actual conversations and therapy with parents and children, though not verbatim. They are reconstructed from notes she took in her work as a Child Life Specialist. They describe, in detail, productive ways to parent children in these very difficult circumstances.

She illustrates how to ask open-ended questions that encourage a child to respond with answers that reveal her feelings. She describes warning signs that a child needs help and urges parents to consistently continue family lifestyle patterns. She points out the need to prepare the child for a sick parent's homecoming and changes in the family situation.

Ms. McCue has also written **Someone I Love is Sick** (2009), a book to help young children who have a parent or grandparent with cancer.

Another valuable guide, **When a Parent Has Cancer: A Guide To Caring For Your Children** (2004), was written by parent, physician, and cancer survivor Dr. Wendy Harpham. Her book is accompanied by **Becky and the Worry Cup**, a book for young children, about a young girl's experience with her mother's lymphoma diagnosis and treatment.

*Healthnet News is written by Judith Kronick and Alberta Richetelle  
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut  
public libraries, please call 860/679-4055; e-mail address: richetelle@nso.uchc.edu*

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