

VISITING HOURS

School Backpack: Pack It Right Wear It Light

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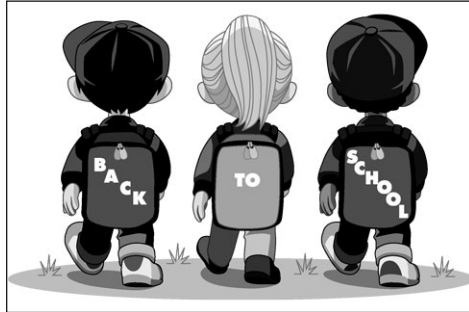
"Can I get a new backpack?" I hear this every year, even when the prior year's pack is in great condition. Half the fun and excitement of the new school year is selecting new supplies and clothes, including a new backpack.

The American Occupational Therapy Association celebrates National School Backpack Awareness Day on the third Wednesday of each September, recommending you "pack it light, wear it right." With school starting in a couple of weeks, this seems like a good time to educate on what to look for and how to wear a backpack or bag to keep your child (and you) safe.

Carrying too much weight or wearing a backpack the wrong way can lead to health problems, such as pain and strain. Wearing a heavy school backpack can lead to tingling arms, aching back and shoulders, stooped posture and weakened muscles.

HOW TO LOAD A BACKPACK:

- Arrange books and materials so they do not slide around in the bag.
- Load the heaviest items closest to the child's back (the back of the pack).
- The loaded backpack should not weigh more than 15% of the child's body weight. For a student weighing 100 pounds, this means the backpack should weigh no more than 15 pounds (7.5 pounds for someone weighing 50 pounds). About 55% of students wear a pack that is heavier than 15% of their body weight.
- On days when the backpack may become overloaded, it is recommended to have your child "hand carry" an extra book or other item.
- If your child's backpack is consistently overweight, you may want to choose a book bag on wheels.
- Check your child's bag daily to see what they carry to and from school. Make sure that



the contents are necessary for the day's activities.

HOW TO WEAR A BACKPACK:

- Students should actually wear their backpacks lower on their backs. The bottom of the pack should rest in the curve of the low back. It should never rest more than four inches below the child's waistline. Studies have shown that students wearing their backpacks lower are actually enhancing the body's center of gravity and having the least ill effect on posture.
- Distribute weight evenly by wearing both shoulder straps. A common problem with backpacks is the habit of slinging the pack over one shoulder. The natural response of the body is to compensate by leaning to the side that is not carrying the burden, curving the spine and causing pain and discomfort.
- Adjust the shoulder straps so that the pack fits snugly to your child's back. If the pack hangs loosely from the back, it can pull the child backwards and strain muscles. Have your child wear the waist belt if the backpack has one to help distribute the backpack's weight more evenly.
- Choose a backpack that has well-padded straps. Because of the many blood vessels and nerves at the neck and shoulders, a thin, unpadded strap can place too much pressure on these structures and cause tingling and pain in

the neck, arms and hands. A padded back is also beneficial.

The backpack should also fit well for the student. A common misconception is that a young child "will grow into it." School bags come in different sizes for different ages. Also, choose a pack with enough room for necessary items.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MESSENGER BAGS, PURSES, BRIEFCASES:

- For those with shoulder straps, place the strap diagonally across the opposite shoulder to help distribute weight more evenly across the back. Straps should also be wide and adjustable.
 - Alternate shoulders (bags with a strap) or hands (bags with handles) by switching from side to side to prevent all the strain from being on one side of the body.
 - Eliminate unnecessary items and weight from the bag. Coins can easily increase the weight of a purse, and some items might be better left in the car to access.
 - Select purses or bags with individual compartments to distribute weight more evenly.
- Please take the time to select your child's backpack and your next bag. Check them for proper fit and weight. This is one very important way to promote a healthy and safe lifestyle for our children and ourselves. Have an exciting and healthy school year!

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Sources: The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. - www.aota.org

This weekly column is produced by the public relations office at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital to promote healthy lifestyles and provide useful medical information to our community.

Family Life: It Takes Time

BY VAL FARMER
www.valfarmer.com.

We live in a time-centered, child-centered culture where the standard middle class lifestyle is expensive.

We live in a culture of aspiration and accomplishment. Self-worth and material well-being are tied to work and income. Along with Japan, our pace of living and the amount of time spent living is extreme when compared to other countries and cultures.

Production oriented work. Time is a convenient measure of how much was done instead of how well it was done or how it felt. Time on the job has clear boundaries and well-defined limits. Time on the job can be controlled and scheduled. The clock helps measure our progress.

Task-oriented work. There is a certain kind of work that disregards time constraints. Examples of this might include feeding livestock, reacting to emergencies, or creating a painting.

This happens when we are absorbed in a creative effort or when the task itself is so compelling that we can't quit until it is finished or until a natural breaking point occurs.

Some jobs have to be done now. It is not time that controls success but meeting the demands or requirements at hand.

Relationships and time. Relationships are needs-oriented. Needs can't be ignored or put off. Satisfaction is judged by whether they are met or how it felt.

Meeting needs depends on a quality of being on call, available, approachable, able to set aside one's personal agenda and devote one's interest and energy to another's well-being.

This is not scheduled, structured time - time used to further personal goals. This is "wasted" time, time to nurture and sustain the human spirit. When it comes to relationships, quantity of time makes the difference.

Time is prerequisite for genuine human interaction. Instant relationships don't happen. It takes time to build intimacy. Trust, commitment, genuine listening, serving others - all these things take time.

Children get short-changed. Our accelerated lifestyles and workstyles are taking a toll on the quality of our family life. By living at too frantic a pace, we develop a habit of not giving anything, or anyone, our full attention.

It is hard to meet needs when we are feeling rushed and have so many things on our mind. Do we allow enough time for relationships to develop, to unfold, to meet needs?

How available are we? Quality time spent with children is "wasted" time. This requires a looser schedule and a radically different tempo than when we are engaged in productive work.

Children are busy, too. Children's lives are becoming over programmed and over scheduled. Combine that with the busy time-pressured lives of their parents and you eliminate unstructured family time where common interests, values, ideas and fun can be shared. The best part of family life is scheduled out of existence.

Parents look at their children's activity-driven schedules and compare them unfavorably with their own less organized

childhood. Despite this, here are some reasons why parents plunge ahead and involve their children in so many activities.

Higher aspirations. We want the best for our children and go out of our way to provide them with experiences, opportunities and skills that were unheard of just two or three decades ago. Older children raised in a different era can't believe the amount of opportunities the youngest have compared to their own childhoods. Team sports, private lessons, specialized camps, music, drama, leadership, church youth groups, extra-curricular activities - you name it, it is all there.

Safety and social life. Activities provide constructive care in a secure context. Neighborhoods are less safe than in times past. Years ago there were more at-home mothers available to provide a safe haven and semi-supervision for neighborhood play.

The more children who are involved in organized, structured activities mean fewer playmates available on the streets. This becomes self-fulfilling as even more parents turn to organized activities as their only choice for after school companionship. Parents often feel that if their children to have any kind of social life, it has to be planned.

Organized activities have advantages. Instead of reading a book, exploring a stream or organizing an impromptu neighborhood game, children now gravitate to video games, trashy TV or other activities of questionable value. Organized activities look good in comparison.

Kids don't like haggling about rules that go with pickup games. Being picked as a teammate near the end is a major blow to self-esteem that makes unstructured games a traumatic experience. Coaches, rules, and referees help remove the unfairness and hassle that are a part of unsupervised games. Children are becoming as involved and time-pressured as adults. They internalize time pressures, deadlines and schedule.

Doing more by doing less. The problem in having a family life is not getting more done in less time. It is loosening up one's schedule so that important personal and family needs are being met.

This goes against our "do everything," "have everything," "get everything done" culture. To be free of the tyranny of the clock, we have to reign in our ambitions and make hard choices.

With children, there needs to be time for play, time for relaxation and time to rest. Parents need to be present in their lives, have time for impromptu fun, time to be compassionate, time to meet an important need. By doing a little less, as parents, we can achieve more of what we really want and give children more of what they really need.

For more information on family life, visit Val Farmer's website at www.valfarmer.com.

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Val FARMER

Deal

From Page 1

potential default for the first time in history. Administration officials warned of disastrous consequences for an economy that shows fresh signs of weakness on a near-daily basis as it struggles to recover from the worst recession in decades.

The White House and congressional leaders said legislation was important to reassure investors at home as well as overseas, and also to preserving the nation's AAA credit rating. Following passage of the debt deal, Moody's Investors Service, one of the three main ratings agencies, said it was retaining its triple-A rating on U.S. bonds but with a negative outlook to show there is still a risk of a downgrade.

This week's peace pact between the two parties is unlikely to be long-lived.

The bill sets up a powerful 12-member committee of lawmakers with authority to recommend fresh deficit savings from every corner of the federal budget.

Politically sensitive benefit programs such as Social Security and Medicare will be on the table as the panel of six Republicans and six Democrats works against a Thanksgiving deadline. So, too, an overhaul of the tax code. Congress will have until Christmas to vote on the recommendations without the ability to make changes.

As an incentive for Congress to act, failure to do so would trigger \$1.2 trillion in automatic spending cuts, affecting the Pentagon as well as domestic programs.

Even before the president

signed the legislation, he and Republicans were maneuvering for political position on the next stage.

"We can't balance the budget on the backs of people who have borne the biggest brunt of this recession," the president said, renewing his call for higher taxes on the wealthy. "Everyone is going to have to chip in. It's only fair."

Senate Republicans say it will not happen. "I'm comfortable we aren't going to raise taxes coming out of this joint committee," McConnell said in an interview with Fox on Monday.

In a speech shortly before the vote, he predicted instead a renewal of the most recent struggle over spending cuts.

The debt limit will have to be raised shortly after the 2012 election, he said, predicting that no president of either party will be "allowed to raise the debt ceiling without ... having to engage in the kind of debate we've just been through."

He conceded that Republicans got only part of what they wanted in the deal, and he pointed to next year's elections with control of the White House and Congress at stake as a chance to gain greater clout.

"Republicans only control one half of one third of the federal government, but the American people agree with us," he said.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-NeV., said the period immediately ahead "is going to be painful," particularly if Republicans insist they will not raise any taxes.

Numerous Democrats have complained about the concessions Obama accepted in the deal, and Reid and other Democrats sought immediately to change the subject.

"We now have the chance to pivot away from budget battles to jobs," said Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-

N.Y. "We can reset the debate, and that's what we intend to do."

Obama spoke in less partisan terms at the White House.

"Both parties share power in Washington, and both parties need to take responsibility for improving this economy," he said.

This week's legislation ratified an agreement that took shape slowly. For months there had been partisan flare-ups and internal disagreements within each party, then suddenly things changed last weekend when McConnell and Vice President Joe Biden bargained by telephone.

The immediate impact is to raise the debt limit by \$400 billion, giving the Treasury what it needs to avoid exceeding the current \$14.3 trillion cap. An additional \$500 billion increase will be available, subject to disapproval by Congress.

In exchange, spending is to be cut by \$917 billion over a decade from Cabinet-level agencies and the thousands of federal programs they administer.

The bill's second phase begins with the creation of the special committee of lawmakers. Depending on its success in recommending savings that Congress ratifies by Christmas, the nation's borrowing authority will rise by \$2.1 trillion or as much as \$2.5 trillion.

Either way, it is estimated to be enough to avoid a rerun of the current crisis before the 2012 elections.

That was Obama's bottom-line demand in a negotiating endgame, and while Republicans ridiculed him over it, they consented.

Yet Boehner and McConnell were able to wring key concessions of their own.

The maneuvering began hours after Congress convened last January, the House under control of Republicans for the first time in four years.

At a news conference then, Boehner announced the administration had notified him an increase in the debt limit would be needed, and he said any change must include "meaningful action" to cut spending.

Initially, the White House resisted the linkage, then relented.

On May 9, Boehner laid down a second condition — any debt limit increase must occur in tandem with spending cuts that were greater in size.

Obama wanted a balanced plan that included both spending cuts and higher revenues, and for a brief time, it appeared that might be in the offing.

Months later, he and Boehner sought a sweeping agreement that would have trimmed deficits by \$4 trillion or more, possibly including curbs on the rise on Social Security benefit checks and an increase in the age for Medicare benefits from 65 to 67.

By Boehner's own account, he agreed to consider an overhaul of the tax code under which government revenues would rise from current levels. It was carefully framed — the increase would result from assumed greater economic expansion.

Then a group of bipartisan senators unveiled a plan of their own, calling for even higher additional revenues.

In response, Obama raised his demand, and Boehner announced a little more than two weeks ago he was calling off those talks.

That set the stage for a partisan endgame in which House Republicans and Senate Democrats drafted rival bills — then watched them rejected by the other side — before McConnell and Biden worked out a final deal.

Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor, Donna Cassata and Ben Feller contributed to this story.

Turkey

From Page 1

"Consumers have no idea what to do except not eat ground turkey," he said.

The illnesses are spread all over the country. The states with the highest number sickened were Michigan and Ohio, 10 illnesses each, while nine illnesses were reported in Texas. Illinois had seven, California six and Pennsylvania five.

The remaining states have between one and three reported illnesses linked to the outbreak, according to the CDC: Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

A chart on the CDC's website shows cases have occurred every month since early March, with spikes in May and early June. The latest reported cases were in mid-July, although the CDC said some recent cases may not have been reported yet.

University of Pennsylvania bioethicist Art Caplan said the government's handling of the outbreak raises ethical questions about why the public wasn't warned sooner.

"You've got to protect the

public health. That's their first and primary value — not industry, not any other goal. They have to warn as quickly as they think there's reasonable evidence for concern," Caplan said.

He said that uncertainty about the outbreak's source might explain the long silence, but added, "the moral duty is to really get the word out as soon as you have evidence of a problem."

CDC spokeswoman Lola Russell said Tuesday it can take three to four weeks to confirm one case. Identifying an outbreak can take considerably longer than that when cases of food-borne illness occur sporadically, in several states, as has happened in the current outbreak, she said.

Russell said the CDC isn't advising the public to avoid eating ground turkey, but does urge people to cook it properly.

Ground turkey is considered safe to eat when the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees. For turkey patties or burgers, internal temperatures on each side should be measured.

Other government advice: • Refrigerate raw meat and poultry within two hours after purchase, one hour if temperatures in the house exceed 90 F.

• Refrigerate cooked meat and poultry within two hours after cooking.

• Wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw meat and poultry.

The CDC estimates that 50 million Americans each year get sick from food poisoning, including about 3,000 who die. Salmonella causes most of these cases and federal health officials say they've made virtually no progress against it.