1. **Schedule Check-Ups:** Most schools require up to date immunization records before children return to school. Contact your child’s school to find out what might be required and ask for the forms your healthcare provider needs to complete for school attendance as well as participation in sports or other school activities.

2. **Restart Routines:** All children need time to adjust, so plan ahead. A week before school starts, make bedtime earlier and start serving meals at the same time you will during the school year.

3. **Set Reasonable Goals:** Discuss with your child what goals she/he might want to reach this school year and make a list of them. These can be as simple as making two new friends this year, improving skills in reading or writing, or participating in the spelling bee!

4. **Go Over Ground Rules:** Determine when and where your child will do his/her homework, what chores your child will be doing, when he/she can watch TV or play on the computer and how late your child may stay up at night. Be sure to discuss this with your child so that everybody has a clear understanding on the expectations.

5. **Pick Your Battles:** Back-to-school can be a stressful time for both parents and children. Be flexible where you can. Planning ahead can often reduce stress for everyone. For example: review the dress code with your children and help them pick out several outfits that they like and also meet the requirements.

6. **Arrive On Time:** Help your children establish routines that help ensure they will arrive to school on time. Important information is often given right at the beginning of class when students are most focused and receptive. Regular attendance is essential for school success, so before planning family trips, check the school calendar and talk to your child’s teachers about any work that will be missed.

7. **Designate a Homework Area:** Create a quiet, well-lit and most importantly fun area for study without distractions and provide the necessary supplies your child needs, such as paper, pencil, and dictionary.

8. **Stay Informed:** Show your children that you value education by attending parent nights, signing and returning school notes, and establishing a positive relationship with teachers. Email is usually the best method of communication, but reading school newsletters is also helpful. Many schools offer parents online access to students’ assignments, calendars, grades and other important information.

9. **Plan Healthy Meals:** Remember that nutrition is an important factor in school success. Research shows that children who eat healthy, balanced meals are more alert and perform better than those who have an unhealthy diet.

10. **Remember, Homework is for Your Child:** Learning new skills requires practice. Expect your children to do their personal best, but don’t expect perfection. Homework assignments help teachers find out how well children understand what is being taught. Young children may need guidance and prompting to complete assignments, but older children should learn to take full responsibility for completing and turning in their own work. Alert teachers if your child consistently needs help to complete their homework. If assignments are too difficult for a child to complete on their own, they may need extra help at school.

**HERE’S HELP**

There are several programs that help with the costs of going back to school, including school supplies, lunches and health insurance. To find out if your family qualifies for assistance, speak to school administrators or your child’s teachers. For more information on the National School Lunch Program, visit www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/.

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**A Family Development Tip Sheet from the Pinwheels for Prevention Campaign**
According to the National Safety Council, the leading cause of death for children between the ages of one and four is unintentional injury, with almost 4,000 fatalities a year. More than 4.5 million American children are injured every year. Leading causes of unintentional childhood injury and death in Florida include falls, drowning, burns and poisoning.

The following pages outline steps parents and caregivers can take to help prevent childhood injuries. Childproofing is an on-going task that increases the amount of time it takes for children to get into dangerous situations, but it is no substitute for adult supervision. Adult supervision is the most effective strategy for preventing childhood injuries.

Preventing Childhood Injury from Falls

FALLS ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES TO CHILDREN. The majority of fall-related injuries in children ages birth to 5 occur at home.

Most infant falls are from furniture, stairs or baby walkers. Caregivers should cover sharp furniture corners with padding, use safety gates to block access to stairs and avoid using mobile baby walkers. Babies can be injured by rolling off of furniture such as a changing table, an adult bed or a sofa. Use the safety strap that comes with the changing table or place the changing pad on the floor to change the baby. Always put babies to sleep on their backs in a crib that meets current safety standards. For information on crib safety, visit www.safekids.org or call 1-800- FLA-LOVE.

Most toddler falls are from windows and balconies. Caregivers should move furniture away from windows to prevent children from climbing to windows. Screens are designed to keep bugs out; they don’t keep children in. Caregivers should install window guards and secure balcony doors with child-resistant latches.

Most falls involving older children are from bikes, skateboards, scooters and playground equipment.

▶ Avoid hard-surfaced play areas. Seek out playgrounds with wood chips, sand or rubber surfaces.
▶ Insist that children wear a helmet when riding a bicycle—*it’s the law!* Helmets and protective padding will also decrease the risk of injury from falls off scooters or skates/skateboards.

Children of all ages are often injured when jumping on furniture or running on slippery surfaces. These activities should be replaced with more appropriate choices such as playing outside in an environment designed for safe physical activity.
Preventing Childhood Drowning

DROWNING IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF UNINTENTIONAL INJURY-RELATED DEATH FOR CHILDREN AGES ONE TO FOUR. Most drowning incidents occur in swimming pools; however, young children can drown in less than two inches of water. Pool submersions involving children happen quickly and silently, with most child drowning victims missing from sight for less than 5 minutes.

Fences, barriers and alarms add an extra layer of protection.
- Install fencing, pool alarms, door locks or other barriers whenever possible.
- Always secure safety covers and barriers to prevent children from gaining access to pools, spas or hot tubs when not in use.
- Never disable an alarm or prop open the gate to a pool barrier.
- Learn to swim and teach children how to swim.
- Flotation devices and swimming lessons are not a substitute for adult supervision.
- Remove toys from in and around the pool area, especially riding toys.

Each year children drown in bathtubs, buckets, coolers, ponds, ditches, fountains, hot tubs, toilets, pet water bowls and wading pools.

Most childhood drowning deaths occur when the parent or caregiver becomes distracted by the telephone, doorbell or chores around the home. Children can drown in a matter of seconds. If a child is missing, check the water first.
- Children must always be supervised by an adult when playing in or around water.
- Never allow a young child to be responsible for a younger sibling or playmate.
- Empty buckets immediately after use and store them upside down and out of a child’s reach.
- Keep toilet seats down and consider using a lock or toilet clip to prevent toddlers from opening the toilet.

Preventing Childhood Poisoning

A poison is any substance that can cause harm to your body. Children can be poisoned by swallowing or inhaling poisons or absorbing poisons through the skin.

Common poisons include:
- Cleaning products
- Cosmetics and personal hygiene products
- Art supplies
- Alcoholic beverages
- Houseplants
- Pesticides
- Lead
- Prescription and over-the-counter medicines
- Overdoses of iron-containing supplements, including pediatric multi-vitamin supplements
- Carbon monoxide from unvented supplemental heaters

It’s Your Turn | RAISE THE leaders OF TOMORROW
Most unintentional poisonings occur in the home:
- Know which household products are poisonous
- Never leave poisonous products within children’s reach
- Keep foods and household products separated
- Keep all products in their original containers
- Do not mix cleaning solutions together
- Always read medicine labels and follow dosage instructions
- Always turn on the light when giving or taking medicine so you can clearly see that you have the right medication and dosage
- Never refer to vitamins or medicine as candy
- Avoid taking medicines in front of children and never drink medicines from the bottle
- Store household products and medications in high cabinets and use child resistant cabinet locks
- Remove poisonous plants from in and around the home
- Teach friends and relatives to keep their medications and other potentially poisonous items out of children’s reach.

The Poison Control Information Hotline is just a phone call away: 1-800-222-1222.

Preventing Childhood Burns
- Keep matches and lighters out of children’s reach.
- Avoid using portable heaters in rooms where children play or sleep.
- Never leave children alone in a room with candles, space heaters or a burning fireplace.
- Don’t allow children to play around outdoor grills or open fires.
- Install a fire extinguisher in the kitchen.
- Smoke detectors are the greatest advance in fire safety and burn prevention in the last decade. Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Test smoke detectors every month and replace the batteries every six months.
- Practice a fire escape plan with your children and make sure children have a safe way to reach the ground from upper floors, such as a non-combustible escape ladder.

Most burns in children under five are caused by scalding liquids.
- Lower the water heater thermostat to 120°Fahrenheit or below.
- Use a cool-mist humidifier in place of a hot water vaporizer to avoid steam burns and scalds often caused by hot water vaporizers.
- Keep hot items in the center of the table and avoid using a tablecloth because children can pull on the cloth causing hot foods or drinks to fall onto the child.
- While cooking, keep children at least three feet away from the stove, use back burners whenever possible and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Never leave a child alone in the kitchen when food is cooking.
- Never carry a child and hot liquids at the same time.
- Never warm a baby bottle in the microwave. Microwaves heat unevenly and a child may be burned by hot spots.
- Stir and test the temperature of foods before giving them to children.

Not all burns are treated the same way; if your child is burned or scalded, call the child’s doctor immediately.

Being a parent is hard, but there is help.
Call Florida’s FREE and CONFIDENTIAL parent helpline.

1-800-FLA-LOVE
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
THE FACTS ABOUT SPANKING

The goal of discipline is to teach children the skills and values they need to develop into responsible adults. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the 3 keys to discipline that will result in better child behavior are:

1. A learning environment characterized by positive, supportive parent–child relationships;
2. A strategy for systematic teaching and strengthening of desired behaviors (proactive); and
3. A strategy for decreasing or eliminating undesired or ineffective behaviors (reactive)\(^1\).

According to research presented in Plain Talk About Spanking, the act of spanking actually undermines these three keys to effective discipline\(^2\).

**Spanking Damages Parent-Child Relationships**

Survival is the newborn infant’s overriding concern. Fear of falling and of loud noises, like the need to suckle, are not learned responses. They come ready-made and fully functioning at birth. And beginning immediately after birth, the sound of the mother’s voice, the warmth and gentleness of her touch, the scent of her body, the taste of her milk- these key experiences inform the infant of its world and sets the stage for all that follows. Trust is crucial and must be established early.

When trust between children and their closest caretaker is damaged by neglect, rough handling, threats, shouts and harsh treatment including spanking, the children’s ability to form trusting relationships with others is also damaged and the effect may be lifelong. They tend to see the world as an extension of their home life- a dangerous environment in which the best protection against being a victim is to be a victimizer.

Parents who deliver the so-called “good smack” are not teaching their children that hot stoves and busy streets are dangerous. They are teaching them that the grownups upon whom they depend are dangerous. That’s a bad lesson. The spanked child is less able to regard the parent as a source of love and security.

**Spanking Disrupts Healthy Child Development and Learning**

Early childhood is a very sensitive and critical period in brain development. Stresses caused by pain and fear of spanking can derail natural, healthy brain growth, resulting in life-long and irreversible abnormalities. Instead of improving behavior and school performance, spanking slows down mental development and lowers the probability of a child doing well in school.

- School systems with the highest rates of corporal punishment (spanking) are the worst-performing.
- Students who are the most punished are the most troubled and difficult to manage.
- States that have the highest rates of school paddling also have the lowest graduation rates, the highest rates of teen pregnancy and the highest incarceration and murder rates.

**There are More Effective Options than Spanking**

Although spanking may immediately reduce or stop an undesired behavior, its effectiveness decreases the more often it is used. The only way to maintain the initial effect of spanking is to increase the intensity with which it is delivered, which can quickly escalate into abuse. Also, children may begin to engage in other unwanted behaviors, such as lying or sneaking around, in order to avoid being spanked.

Strategies like time-out or removal of privileges work better than spanking for reducing undesired behavior in children.

**Positive Parenting Skills**

Wise caretakers establish a safe environment with age-appropriate boundaries and reasonable rules, model desired behaviors, and cultivate a child’s natural inclination toward imitation and cooperation. This requires some skill and patience, but it is worth the extra effort.


\(^2\) Jordan Riak. Plain Talk About Spanking (California: PTAVE, 1992)
Encouraging Childhood Nutrition and Fitness

It is important for children to learn good eating and exercise habits early in life. Healthy food choices, child-sized portions and active lifestyles are the keys to preventing obesity.

**TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING HABITS**

- Eating a healthy breakfast is a good way to start the day and may be important in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.
- After 2 years of age, children should drink fat-free or low-fat milk or water. Drinks with added sugars, such as soft drinks, fruit juice drinks, and sports drinks should be limited.
- Children need to eat frequently to keep up energy and growth. They are hungry after school and usually need a snack before dinner. Give fresh fruit and vegetables for snacks instead of chips, cookies and sodas which are high in fat, calories or added sugars and low in essential nutrients. At the same time, don’t restrict all “bad” treats or kids may obsess over them.
- Offer whole grains as much as possible. Good sources are cereals, bagels, rice cakes and graham crackers.
- Eat at least one meal a day as a family. Children learn healthy eating habits from your example.
- Discourage eating meals or snacks while watching TV.
- Avoid the use of food as a reward.
- Avoid withholding food as a punishment.
- When feeding children remember that child portion sizes are smaller than those for adults. Also, it is much easier to get a child to try a new food if there is only a little on the plate.

**TIPS FOR GETTING EXERCISE**

- Kids are more active when television, video games and other sedentary activities are limited. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests limiting screen time to no more than one to two hours of quality TV and videos a day for older children and no screen time for children under the age of two.
- Be a role model for your kids by taking part in active play. Take theme walks or walk to nearby destinations, such as a store or a friend’s house. Schedule weekly family activities like playing basketball, riding bikes, or visiting a park or playground.
- Schools can be resources for team sports and other after-school programming. Find out what is offered. Other free or inexpensive avenues are city park and recreation programs, YMCA, and Girls and Boys Clubs.
- Check out library books and videos about sport instruction or athletes. This may help and inspire children and help them build confidence in their abilities.

**BEAUTY REST**
Too little rest can mean overeating to keep going, as well as being too tired to exercise. Children ages 7 to 18 need 9 hours of sleep; younger kids need more. Set a consistent, early bedtime for children.

For additional information, visit [www.cdc.gov/health/nutrition.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/health/nutrition.htm) and [www.health.gov](http://www.health.gov). For more specific advice on your child’s nutrition and activities, talk to your doctor.