

This Just In...

How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways

Every February 14, loved ones around the country exchange gifts, flowers, and candy — all in the name of St. Valentine. The AAP has also flirted with matters of the heart and offers 10 ways to show love for your children this Valentine's Day.

1. Respond promptly and lovingly to your child's physical and emotional needs and banish put-downs from your parenting vocabulary.
2. Make an extra effort to set a good example at home and in public. Use words such as "I'm sorry," "please," and "thank you."
3. When your child is angry or in a bad mood, give him a hug, cuddle, pat, secret sign, or other gesture of affection he favors and talk with him about his feelings.
4. Use nonviolent forms of discipline, and institute both rewards and restrictions many years before adolescence to help prevent trouble during the teenage years.
5. Mark family game nights on your calendar so the entire family can be together.
6. Familiarize your child with good food choices by encouraging him to cook with you.
7. Your child's health depends significantly on the care and guidance you offer during his early years. By taking your child to the doctor for regular checkups (or physical exams), keeping him safe from accidents, providing a nutritious diet, and encouraging exercise throughout childhood, you help protect and strengthen his body.
8. Help your child foster positive relationships with friends, siblings, and members of the community.
9. One of your most important gifts as a parent is to help your child develop self-esteem. Your child needs your steady support and encouragement to discover his strengths. He needs you to believe in him as he learns to believe in himself. Loving him, spending time with him, listening to him, and praising his accomplishments are all part of this process.
10. Don't forget to say, "I love you."

Movies' Special Effects

Parental rules and monitoring of children's movie viewing may have a protective influence on children's risk for smoking and drinking. A new study, "Parental Rules and Monitoring of Children's Movie Viewing Associated with Children's Risk for Smoking and Drinking," in the November 2006 edition of *Pediatrics*, surveyed 2,606 children (ages 9 to 12) and their parents on how often parents monitored their children's movie viewing, and if their children were allowed to watch R-rated movies. The children were also asked if they intended to or had tried smoking or drinking alcohol.

Results indicated that children were at lowest risk of smoking and drinking if their parents prohibited them from watching R-rated movies. Children were also at lower risk for smoking or drinking if their parents always accompanied them to the video store, found out what a movie is rated before allowing their children to watch it, and checked what movies their children watch at friends' homes.

School Bus Injuries Higher Than Previously Reported

Previous reports have greatly underestimated the number of children injured on school buses, according to “School Bus-Related Injuries Among Children and Teenagers in the United States, 2001-2003,” a study published in the November 2006 edition of *Pediatrics*. The report is the first to analyze non-fatal school bus injuries using a national sample. It found more than 51,000 children — or 17,000 annually — through age 19 were treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments during the three-year period. Children 10 to 14 years of age were injured most often, with girls accounting for just over half of the injuries. Most injuries were caused by motor vehicle crashes and accidents that occurred while boarding the bus.

What is a “Normal” Menstrual Cycle?

A report published by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Obstetrics and Gynecology in the November 2006 edition of *Pediatrics* aims to help pediatric providers teach adolescents and their parents about what to expect of a first menstrual period, including average cycle length and timing of subsequent periods. “Menstruation in Adolescents: Using the Menstrual Cycle as a Vital Sign” also points out that once an adolescent begins menstruating, her cycle should be assessed as a vital sign, since it can be an indicator of other possible medical problems.

According to the study, the age when a girl has her first period has remained relatively stable at between 12 and 13 years of age. Among the information clinicians should share with patients: The menstrual cycle is from the first day of a period to the first day of the next period and may vary in length, with some girls experiencing four-week cycles and others more or less than four weeks.



Sports Can Be Fun and Healthy — Without a \$1 Million Contract

Parents and coaches should embrace the idea of “reality sports success,” says Paul R. Stricker, M.D., in his recent book, *Sports Success Rx! Your Child’s Prescription for the Best Experience: How to Maximize Potential and Minimize Pressure*. An expert in pediatric and adolescent sports medicine and former U.S. Olympic team physician, Dr. Stricker outlines for parents and coaches the physical and emotional milestones that determine sports skill development in youth.

He highlights how children develop and what physical skills are achievable and appropriate for each age group. Dr. Stricker asks parents to think critically about their child’s sports participation and define their own role in ensuring that their young athlete is having fun and staying safe. He also discourages the unrealistic expectations many parents and coaches put on young athletes: We can’t all become the next Tiger Woods.