

# Healthy Start Newsletter

May 2010

## Autism Spectrum Disorders...How Common?

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a group of developmental disabilities that include atypical development in socialization, communications, and behavior. ASD usually appears before age 3 years, and can be associated with other difficulties that affect a person's life. There is no laboratory test for ASD, so the diagnosis has to be made by professionals who evaluate a child's developmental progress.

Over the past years, a number of reports have indicated that the frequency of autism is increasing dramatically. Some experts felt this increase was the result of more attention being focused on childhood development, with the result that more children were now getting the diagnosis of ASD even though the actual frequency of this condition hadn't changed much over the years; other experts felt that while diagnosis might be improving, there was also a true increase in ASD over these years.

To learn about just how common ASD might be, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) compared information they obtained in 2002 and 2006 from a number of sites in the US where they were paying intense attention to how the diagnosis was made. The study data from 2006 revealed that, on average, 1% of children from the 11 study sites had a diagnosis of ASD; rates in males were much higher than in females—with 1 in 70 males having ASD and 1 in 315 females having that diagnosis. Among the 8 year olds who were involved in the study the frequency of ASD increased by 57% between 2002 and 2006. In attempting to explain the increase, the CDC experts note that although improved detection accounts for some of the increase in ASD diagnoses, "a true increase in risk for children to develop ASD symptoms cannot be ruled out." Further, "ASDs were being diagnosed by community professionals at earlier ages in 2006 than in 2002." (*Rice C: National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, CDC; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Surveillance Summaries, December 18, 2009; 58:2210; 1-20*)

### ...Encouraging News About Interventions...

It's been widely believed that early detection of ASD could provide opportunities for early intervention, and a recent study supports the benefits of early intervention among these children. Researchers tested the "Early Start Denver Model" (ESDM), a comprehensive behavioral intervention focused on a child's development, among 48 children diagnosed with ASD between the ages of 18 and 30 months. About half the children underwent 2 years of intervention using the ESDM, which was delivered by trained therapists working with the children's parents; the other half underwent 2 years of intervention through providers in the community who would otherwise be available for children with ASD.

Compared to the children in the community intervention group, those who received ESDM showed improvements in IQ, their ability to adapt, and the severity of their ASD diagnosis. The authors concluded that "results of this study underscore the importance of early detection of and intervention in autism." (*Dawson G et al: Pediatrics, originally published online 2010; e17-e23; DOI 10.1542/peds.2009-0958*)

### And The "Final Word" On The Role Of Vaccines As A Cause Of Autism

While few experts doubt that ASD is increasing, the cause for this problem remains unclear. Twelve years ago, the notion that vaccines might cause autism, and in particular, that the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) childhood vaccine might be the culprit, received worldwide attention as a result of an article published in a prominent British medical journal (*The Lancet*) by Dr. Andrew Wakefield and his colleagues. That article resulted in many parents choosing not to vaccinate their children, and in subsequent outbreaks of the illnesses that would have been protected by the vaccines; it also led to over 25 studies that were conducted to see if there was indeed a relationship between the vaccine and autism; the studies consistently found no evidence of a link. Over the years, most of Dr. Wakefield's colleagues have admitted that the interpretation of their findings was incorrect, but Dr. Wakefield refused to retract his findings, leaving many parents to believe that, despite all the other studies, there may be truth to the original *Lancet* report.

In January of this year, Britain's General Medical Council, its highest medical board, declared that Dr. Wakefield was guilty of both dishonesty and irresponsibility, arguing that he subjected children to unnecessary and painful procedures and operated in an unethical manner. He also failed to tell *The Lancet* that the study had been funded from sources that wanted to take legal action against the vaccine manufacturers, and that he himself had a patent application for a new vaccine.

*The Lancet*, in a brief statement, has now stated that, based on the Board's findings, "we fully retract this paper from the published record." (*The Editors of The Lancet: The Lancet, page 445, February 6, 2010*)

### COMMENT:

Such a complete retraction of a medical paper is highly unusual, and in our view it was long overdue. As long as 12 years ago, Dr. Wakefield's work was criticized for its poor science and over-the-top interpretation of its findings. Unfortunately, the public anxiety it created led to more than 2 dozen papers designed to see whether his ideas could be correct. Though no reputable scientist could repeat his study findings and 25 studies found no evidence to support his findings, the many millions of dollars that were spent on those studies—and the decades it took to conduct them—could have been better devoted to research on other possible causes of autism and intervention studies that might help children who have ASD.

*The Lancet* retraction should signal the end of the view that vaccines cause autism, and we can only hope that researchers can now devote themselves to finding the true causes in an effort to prevent children being affected in the future, and that funding can now be directed towards interventions to improve the lives of the many children who now have ASD.

Reprinted from CHILD HEALTH ALERT, PO Box 610228,  
Newton Highlands, MA 02461

# Protect the Ones You Love—Falls

## The Reality

We all want to keep our children safe and secure and help them live to their fullest potential. Knowing how to prevent leading causes of child injury, like falls, is a step toward this goal.

Falls are the leading cause of non-fatal injuries for all children ages 0 to 19. Every day, approximately 8,000 children are treated in U.S. emergency rooms for fall-related injuries. This adds up to almost 2.8 million children each year.

Thankfully, many falls can be prevented, and parents and

caregivers can play a key role in protecting children.

## Prevention Tips

The following are tips that can be used to prevent children from sustaining injuries related to falls:

**Play safely.** Check to make sure playground equipment your child uses is properly designed and maintained and there's a safe, soft landing surface below.

**Make home safety improvements.** Use home safety devices, such as guards on windows that are above ground level, stair gates, and guard

rails. These devices can help keep a busy, active child from taking a dangerous tumble.

**Keep sports safe.** Make sure your child wears protective gear when playing active sports, such as wrist guards, knee and elbow pads, and a helmet when in-line skating.

## Supervision is key.

Supervise young children at all times around fall hazards, such as stairs and playground equipment, whether you're at home or out to play.

<http://www.cdc.gov/safechild>

# Great Resource for Families—Text4Baby

***Text4baby helps new and expecting mothers give their babies the best possible start!***

The Partnership Center is pleased to promote the launch of an exciting new mobile information service called **text4baby**. This initiative was announced in April by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. An educational program, **text4baby** provides pregnant women and new moms with information to help them care for their health and give their babies the best possible start in life... using their cell phones!

Each year in the U.S., more than 500,000 babies are born prematurely and an estimated 28,000 children die before their first birthday, signifying a national public health crisis. The infant mortality rate in the U.S. is one of the highest in the industrialized world and pre-maturity is often cited as being a leading cause of infant mortality.

Mobile phones can play a significant role in health care by delivering information directly to those who need it most. Text messaging can deliver the right health information at the right time to pregnant women and new moms, and can be particularly helpful in reaching underserved populations.

While not everyone has access to the Internet, 90% of Americans have a mobile phone. Text messaging is disproportionately higher among women of childbearing age and minority populations who face higher infant mortality rates. In studies from around the world, mobile health services like **text4baby** have demonstrated the ability to help change improve health outcomes. Here's how it works:

- Women can sign up for the service by **texting BABY to 511411 (or BEBE for Spanish to the same number)**. Once signed up, they will receive free SMS

text messages each week, timed to their due date or baby's date of birth.

- These messages focus on a variety of topics critical to maternal and child health: nutrition, mental health, birth defects prevention, oral health and safe sleep, seasonal flu and immunization. **Text4baby** messages also connect women to prenatal and infant care services.
- Of particular significance, **text4baby** is a **free service** for all subscribers and is the first ever free mobile health information service in the U.S. with great potential to reach an enormous audience.

Consider spreading the word about **text4baby** to your clients, congregants, program participants and patients.

Please see below for sample language you can use in emails, newsletters or church bulletins to help spread the word about **text4baby**.

- *If you're pregnant or a new mom, there is new free service called **text4baby** that can help keep you and your baby healthy.*
- ***Text4baby** will send 3 text messages each week to your cell phone with expert health tips to help you through your pregnancy and your baby's first year. It's free to sign up and the messages are free.*
- *To sign up, text **BABY** to **511411**. To sign up for **text4baby** in Spanish, text **BEBE** to **511411**.*
- *You can also sign up and find more at [www.text4baby.org](http://www.text4baby.org).*

*Text4baby is an educational service of the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition.*

# Child Development—1 to 2 Years Old

During this time, your child is becoming increasingly more mobile, and aware of himself and his surroundings. Her desire to explore new objects and people is also increasing. During this stage, your toddler will show greater independence, begin to show defiant behavior, recognize himself in pictures or a mirror, and imitate the behavior of others, especially adults and older children.

Your toddler will also be able to recognize names of familiar people and objects, form simple phrases and sentences, and follow simple instructions and directions.

For more information on developmental milestones and warning signs of possible developmental delays, visit *Learn the Signs - Act Early* (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/ActEarly>).

## Positive Parenting:

- Keep reading to your toddler daily.
- Ask her to find objects for you or name body parts and objects.
- Play matching games with your toddler.
- Encourage him to explore and try new things.
- Help to develop your toddler's language by talking with her.
- Encourage your toddler's curiosity and ability to recognize common objects by taking field trips together to the park or a bus ride.

## Child Safety First:

As your child is becoming increasingly mobile, his ability to encounter more dangers is increasing as well. Here are a few recommendations to help keep your growing toddler safe.

- Block off stairs with a small gate or fence. Lock doors to dangerous places such as the garage or basement.
- Toddler proof your home by placing plug covers on all unused electrical outlets.
- Keep kitchen appliances, irons, and heaters from the reach of your toddler. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Keep sharp objects such as scissors and pens in a safe place.
- Lock up medicines, household cleaners and poisons.
- Never leave her alone in the car, even for a few moments.
- Store any guns in a safe place out of his reach.

[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd)  
Department for Health and Human Services  
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

## Kentucky RX Card

A new statewide discount drug card program called the Kentucky Rx Card is being launched today. The program, which is free to all residents of the Commonwealth, will provide savings of up to 75% on prescription drugs (savings should average roughly 30%). This program has no restrictions to membership, no income requirements, no age limitations and no applications to fill out. Kentucky Rx Card is accepted at over 50,000 pharmacy locations across the country. Kentuckians can download a "FREE" card by visiting:

[WWW.KENTUCKYRXCARD.COM](http://WWW.KENTUCKYRXCARD.COM)  
<http://www.kentuckyrxcard.com/>  
<http://www.kentuckyrxcard.com/>

Anyone not able to access the website, or otherwise obtain a member card from various distribution sites, can simply visit any CVS/pharmacy or Kmart location in Kentucky and ask the pharmacy to have their prescription processed through the Kentucky Rx Card program. Kentucky RxCard was launched to help the uninsured and underinsured residents of Kentucky afford their prescription medications. However, the program can also be used by people who have health insurance coverage with no prescription benefits, which is common in many health savings accounts (HSA) and high deductible health plans. Additionally, people who have prescription coverage can use this program for non-formulary or non-covered medications.

The Kentucky Rx Card is a solution to the confusing maze of discount prescription programs that have appeared in recent years. Many of these programs only cover certain drugs, charge fees, and some have membership restrictions such as age and income limitations. Kentucky residents can download a free card, search drug pricing, and locate participating pharmacies at:

[WWW.KENTUCKYRXCARD.COM](http://WWW.KENTUCKYRXCARD.COM)  
<http://www.kentuckyrxcard.com/>  
<http://www.kentuckyrxcard.com/>

*(Chantix, will run between \$79-\$81 per month using the card.)*



**Healthy Start in Child Care  
Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (KCHIP)  
Green River District Health Department  
P.O. Box 309, 1501 Breckenridge Street  
Owensboro, KY 42302-0309**

*Serving Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio,  
Union, Webster & Breckenridge Counties*



Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program

## **Jump on the Bus Today for Healthier Kids Tomorrow!**



Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program

Your child may qualify for free or low cost health insurance up to age 19 through the Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (KCHIP). KCHIP is only for children without health insurance. Families must meet certain criteria income guidelines to qualify.

**Don't Wait For  
"Back To School"  
to Get Back to the Doctor!**

Get KCHIP information online at [kidshealth.ky.gov](http://kidshealth.ky.gov) or call 1-877-KCHIP-18 (1-817-524-4718).

Children should receive health check-ups regularly or before the following ages:

- 1 month
- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 12 months
- 18 months
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 8 years
- Once a year for ages 10-20

**Request an application  
by calling:**

- 877-KCHIP-18 (877-524-4718)
- Deaf and hard of hearing call 711
- 800-662-5397 for Spanish language services
- Find your local Community Based Services Office online at [chfs.ky.gov/DCBS](http://chfs.ky.gov/DCBS). Click "Find Your Local DCBS Office."