

**The big reason right now to  
wash your child's hands**





Photo by Anna Shvets on Pexels.com

Playing in the great outdoors really is great. But when your kids scamper inside, make sure they wash their hands. Now that the winter viral season has receded, the big reason to wash hands is spring allergy season. The pollen they've collected on their hands will make its way to their face exacerbating already itchy noses and eyes.

The easiest way to tell if your young child is experiencing seasonal allergies is if your nose starts to twitch. If your child's nose also starts to twitch, they probably also have allergies. Allergies have a strong inheritance pattern. If both parents have allergies, up to 50-80 percent of their kids may have allergies. Keep in mind, allergies never cause a fever and since children need to be exposed to an irritant before they can be allergic to it, children under two years of age are less likely to have seasonal allergies—not enough seasons have passed.

For other ways to keep spring allergies in check- read up on this post contributed by Dr. Lai in the CHOP Health TIP of the Week.

Another reason to wash hands after zipping indoors? Poison ivy...but that's a story for another day.

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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## Money Saving Pediatric Hacks

We know how it's easy to spend money on the kids- just wait until they are old enough to get Venmo. Here are some money

saving tips for parents to save a little dough and put that saving towards the next family vacation and orthodontia!

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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# **On the Airwaves! Dr. Kardos talks about the latest in pediatrics on “Your Radio Doctor”**

*Episode 190 – Current Topics in Pediatrics*

Listen here as Dr. Kardos talks about the latest in pediatrics on “Your Radio Doctor” with Dr. Maryanne Ritchie.

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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# **Managing anxiety in children**

 **NAMI Bucks County PA**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

 **Children's Hospital  
of Philadelphia®**

NAMI & CHOP PRIMARY CARE NEWTOWN  
PRESENT A **FREE TALK** FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



# ANXIETY IN CHILDREN AND TEENS

EVERYDAY TECHNIQUES TO **CALM ANXIETY**  
AND **MEDICATION MYTH BUSTERS**

**FEB. 8, 2024 @ 6:30PM • IN PERSON**

**FREE LIBRARY OF NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP**  
25 UPPER HOLLAND RD, RICHBORO, PA 18954

**PRESENTERS INCLUDE:**

DEBORAH PULVER, MD; URSZULA WIERCISZEWSKA, MD;  
KELLY CANN, MD; SUSAN LOGIUDICE, LCSW  
LORA KLEIN, LSW AND MODERATOR NALINE LAI, MD

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AT:

[WWW.NAMIBUCKSPA.ORG/ANXIETY](http://WWW.NAMIBUCKSPA.ORG/ANXIETY)



Parents local to Northampton Township, PA: We welcome you to come hear local pediatricians from The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and mental health experts talk about basic ways you can help manage anxiety and some information about medications for children and teens on February 8, 2024 at

6:30pm in the Northampton Library.

The talk is free and there will be time for questions. Please register so we set up enough chairs!

Special note: your Two Peds will be in attendance. Hope to see you there!

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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# Holiday Gift Ideas for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers



Photo by Yan Krukau on Pexels.com

According to recent US Census data, 30 percent of households have a child under six years of age. So there is a good chance that you are wondering what to get a baby, toddler or preschooler for the holidays. Before you give up and fall back on electronic screen ideas like you did when you last took your toddler to a restaurant, here are holiday gift ideas for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers from your Two Peds, by ages and stages of development:

**0-3 months:** Babies this age have perfect hearing and enjoy looking at faces and objects with contrasting colors. Music, mobiles, and bright posters are some age-appropriate gift ideas. Infants self-soothe through sucking—if you can figure out what your nephew’s favorite type of binky is, wrap up a bunch—they are expensive and often disappear mysteriously.

**3-6 months:** Babies start to reach and grab at objects. There are all sorts of crinkly, textured baby toys out there for babies to enjoy. Give items big enough to hold onto but safe enough to put in their mouths. Remember that any object small enough to fit inside a paper towel tube is small enough to be a choking hazard. Personalize a cloth or vinyl book. The baby will appreciate the book and parents will enjoy the personalization and ability to clean the book.

**6-12 months:** Around six months, babies begin to sit up. Intellectually, they begin to understand “cause and effect.” Good choices of gifts include toys that allow a baby to activate- to make sounds, play music, or cause animals to pop up.

For a nine-month-old just starting to pull herself up to a standing position, a water or sand table will provide hours of entertainment in the upcoming year. Right now you can bring winter inside if you fill the water table with a mound of snow. Buy some inexpensive measuring cups and later in the summer a toddler will enjoy standing outside splashing in the



water.

**12-18 months:** This is the age kids learn to stand and walk. They enjoy things they can push while walking such as shopping carts or plastic lawn mowers. Give gifts which promote joint attention. Joint attention is the kind of attention a child shares with people during moments of mutual discovery. Joint attention starts at two months of age when a parent smiles at their baby and their baby smiles back. Later, around 18 months, if a parent points at a dog in a book, the child will look at the dog, then look back at the parent, and smile. A child not only shows interest in the same object, but will acknowledge that both she and the parent are interested. Joint attention is thought to be important for social and emotional growth.

Toddlers enjoy making music: there are plenty of percussion sets out there!

**18-24 months:** Although kids this age cannot pedal yet, they enjoy riding on toys such as Big Wheels "Fred Flintstone" style. Dexterous enough to drink out of a cup and use a spoon and fork, toddlers can always use another place setting. Toddlers are also able to manipulate shape sorters and toys where they put a plastic ball into the top and the ball goes down a short maze/slide. Avoid the marble runs though, this age still puts choking hazards in their mouths. They also love containers to collect things, dump out, then collect again.

This is the age when kids love making animal sounds. Consider a zoo membership . When you count up how many words your toddler knows, animal noises count as words. (What does the lion say? "Roar!") Many zoos have animal cams that you can first watch from afar. Pair with a stuffed animal and the entire family will enjoy making animal sounds together.

**2-3 years:** To encourage motor skills, offer tricycles, balls, bubbles, and boxes to crawl into and out of. Choose crayons over markers because crayons require a child to exert pressure and therefore develop hand strength. Swiping a phone or ipad does not develop fine motor skills in the same fashion.

Dolls, cars, and sand boxes all foster imagination. Don't forget those indestructible board books so kids can "read" to themselves. By now, the plastic squirting fish bath toys you bought your niece last year are probably squirting out black specks of mold instead of water- get her a new set.

At three years, kids become more and more capable of self care. They start to pull shoes on themselves and can hang their coat up on a hook. The problem? They often can not reach hooks. Offer to purchase a set of cute hooks to hang low in your grandchild's room or the mudroom.

## **Preschooler gifts**

**3-4 years:** Now kids engage in elaborate imaginary play. They enjoy "dress up" clothes to create characters- superheroes, dancers, wizards, princesses, kings, queens, animals. Kids also enjoy props for their pretend play, such as plastic kitchen gadgets, magic wands, building blocks, pretend food and of course, a stethoscope. They become adept at pedaling tricycles or even riding small training-wheeled bikes and balance bikes. Other gift ideas include art supplies such as paint, markers, or side-walk chalk. Play-doh helps develop fine motor skills and hand strength. Children this age understand rules and turn-taking and can be taught simple card games such as "go fish," "war," and "matching."

Three-year-olds recognize colors but can't read- so they can finally play the classic board game Candyland®, and they can rote count in order to play the sequential numbers game Chutes and Ladders®. Preschool kids now understand and execute the process of washing their hands independently. One problem:

they can't reach the faucets on the sink. A personalized, sturdy step stool will be appreciated for years. Likewise, they love to help cook and will use a kitchen counter standing step with study sides for years to come.

Looking ahead, in the spring, a three or four-year-old may start participating in team sports (although they often go the wrong way down the field) or in other classes such as dance or swimming lessons. Give your relatives the gift of shin guards and soccer balls with a shirt. Offer to pay for swim lessons and package the gift certificate with a pair of goggles.

While three-year-olds still do not understand time, four-year-olds start to appreciate time better. Concepts such as yesterday and tomorrow take on more meaning. A good starter clock is a color clock. They signal time by color and are often used to signal to children when it's time to get out of bed on weekends.

**5-year-olds:** Since 5-year-olds can hop on one foot, games like Twister® are fun. Kids this age start to understand time and charts. Get your child a calendar so they can count ahead to your next visit!. They can also work jigsaw puzzles with somewhat large pieces.

For any age, consider tickets to a junior high school musical or minor league sports game. Avoiding large venues not only saves money, but saves time parking and affords the ability to get in and out easily if needed.

The excitement of the surprise is sometimes as exciting as the gift itself. Hence, the reason unboxing youtube videos are as popular as ever. Wrap a child's gift in layers of sparkly crunchy paper and the smiles will come even before the gift is seen.

Happy gifting!

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

# **Protection against severe RSV-we finally have it!**

protection for babies against severe RSV

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# **The truth about the first day of school for parents- from kindergarten to college**



The first of many first days of school.

Parents, let's admit it. Many of the tears shed on the first day of school are our own. The first day of school for parents is not easy. There is genuine sadness and ache that goes beyond the bittersweet as our kids approach momentous milestones such as kindergarten entry and college send off. As our pediatrician friend Dorothy Novick posted on Facebook, "Because here's a thing no one ever says out loud on Facebook: as all the balloons and congrats explode on our feeds, many of us parents of graduates are experiencing some pretty serious grief. There's true pride in the photos, yes, but there's also honest to goodness grief."

**For your kid**-remember the rules of drop off:

- For kids of all ages, convey to them that the transition is a positive experience. You give your child cues on how to act in any situation. Better to convey optimism than anxiety. Kids, no matter the age, mirror the emotions their parents convey.
- For daycare and preschool, take your child and place her into the arms of a loving adult- do not leave her alone in the middle of a room.
- Say good bye. Let your child know that you are leaving. Don't try to sneak off. At any age, it's unsettling for you to suddenly disappear.
- Do not linger. Prolonging any tears, only prolongs tears. The faster you leave, the faster happiness will start.
- For the younger ones- it's ok to go back and spy on them to reassure yourself that they have stopped crying- just don't let them see you. For the older ones-let them have their independence- this is what you've trained them for. In fact, encourage their independence. When your young adult asks you a question, ask it back. Chances are, they already know the answer. Just remind them that

you are always available. Send the care packages and answer their midnight texts.

### **For yourself:**

Congratulate yourself on reaching a family milestone. The first day of school for parents and children is momentous. Yes, the configuration of your family has changed and it will not be the first or last time. Acknowledge the ache of the passage of time, and reach out to others in similar situations.

Just as your child delights you with all of their unique interests and attributes, go show them all the amazing unique things you do. Take up ball room dancing, start a business painting colorful furniture or join an adult soccer league ...these are all real life examples of things we know people embarked on when their kids went off to school.

Cry those "happy tears." But be aware, sentimental "happy tears" can tip over into depression.

If negative thoughts or worries constantly impinge on your thoughts and weigh you down, then seek help. Talk to your doctor for advice. Also, the National Alliance on Mental Illness maintains a lists of resources. Depression looks like sadness much of the time but it can also manifest as anger or anxiety.

### **Warning signs of depression include:**

- Acting out of control
- Losing interest in activities which normally bring pleasure
- Changes in sleep patterns-difficulty falling asleep, numerous awakenings, or excess sleeping
- Having feelings of worthlessness about yourself or other
- Poor work performance
- Low energy or fatigue or conversely restless or "hyper"

(excessive shopping binges)

- An increase in alcohol or drug use (attempts at “self-medicating”)
- Thoughts of being better off dead or a desire to hurt yourself or others

To end on an upbeat (and ok, bittersweet) note, we invite you to read the letter Dr. Lai wrote the day before her first child left for kindergarten.

## **A letter to my child**

My Child,

As we sit, the night before kindergarten, your toes peeking out from under the comforter, I notice that your toes are not so little anymore.

Tomorrow those toes will step up onto to the bus and carry you away from me. Another step towards independence. Another step to a place where I can protect you less. But I do notice that those toes have feet and legs which are getting stronger. You’re not as wobbly as you used to be. Each time you take a step you seem to go farther and farther.

I trust that you will remember what I’ve taught you. Look both ways before you cross the street, chose friends who are nice to you, and whatever happens don’t eat yellow snow. I also trust that there are other eyes and hearts who will watch and guide you.

But that won’t stop me from worrying about each step you take.

Won’t stop me from holding my breath.

Just like when you first started to walk, I’ll always worry when you falter.

I smile because I know you’ll hop up onto the bus tomorrow, proud as punch, laughing and disappearing in a sea of waving



hands. I just hope that at some point, those independent feet will proudly walk back and stand beside me. Maybe it will be when you first gaze into your newborn's eyes, or maybe it will be when your child climbs onto the bus for the first time.

Until then, I hold my breath each time you take a step.

Love,  
Mommy

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD  
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## **What to do if your child is choking**

Perfect timing. I have been seeing a lot of kids starting table foods in the office lately and my sister (an Emergency Medicine doctor) just came out with a video on what to do when someone is choking. She goes over what to do with any age group, so worth a peek even if your kids are bigger than you are.

Prevention hints: As a toddler parent you will find kitchen shears perfect for cutting up food into bite sized pieces. But watch the number of little pieces that your child eats at one time- kids get into trouble when they scoop a pile into their mouths. As for toys, anything that can fit into a paper towel roll is a choking hazard.

Hoping you will never have the opportunity to use the information in the video!

Naline Lai, MD with Julie Kardos, MD

# Vacation packing tips



Worth the packing !

When preparing to travel with your kids, do you sometimes wonder if it's worth all the time and effort? [Click here](#) to find an article from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia where your two Peds and colleagues give some tips to get you through.

Happy travels!


Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

# **Anxiety in kids and everyday calming techniques**

 **NAMI Bucks County PA**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

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of Philadelphia®**

NAMI & CHOP PRIMARY CARE - DOYLESTOWN  
PRESENT A **FREE TALK** FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



# ANXIETY IN CHILDREN AND TEENS

TECHNIQUES TO **CALM EVERYDAY ANXIETY**  
AND **MEDICATION MYTH BUSTERS**

**MAY 4, 2023 @ 7PM • IN PERSON**

**BUCKS COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT - ROOM A**  
705 N. SHADY RETREAT ROAD, DOYLESTOWN, PA 18901

**PRESENTERS INCLUDE**  
LISA GAFFNEY CRNP, JOHN GROVE LCSW,  
AND MODERATOR NALINE LAI MD

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AT:

**[WWW.NAMIBUCKSPA.ORG/ANXIETY](http://WWW.NAMIBUCKSPA.ORG/ANXIETY)**



This upcoming week-register above

Wondering about signs of anxiety in your child or teen?  
Interested in everyday ways to help calm them? Take a peek at  
this post that one of your two peds contributed to: When Your

Child's Anxiety Is Worth Worrying About – and How to Help in The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Health Tips.

A Bucks or Montgomery County, Pennsylvania parent or caretaker? May is mental health awareness month and NAMI Bucks County and CHOP Primary Care, Doylestown have teamed up to give an in-person talk this week! Registration information above- hope to see you there!

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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