

What do ringworm, jock itch, and athlete's foot all have in common?



Ringworm can appear anywhere there is skin- even on the eyelid.

What do ringworm, jock itch, and athlete's foot all have in common? They are all names for the same type of fungal

infection- just in different parts of the body.

These infections, caused by fungi called dermatophytes, fall into the mostly-harmless-but-annoying category of childhood skin rashes. Ringworm (tinea corpus), occurs on the body. Athlete's foot (tinea pedis) occurs on feet, and Jock itch (tinea cruris) occurs in the groin area.

The name "ringworm" comes from one of the typical appearances of a dermatophyte rash. Often, there is a pinkish, slightly raised ring around an oval patch of flesh or light-pink colored, slightly scaly skin. Sometimes the patch is slightly itchy, but not as itchy as allergic reactions like insect bites.

Diagnosis

Your child's doctor diagnoses the rash by examining your child's skin. To treat the rash, apply the recommended antifungal medication until the rash is gone for at least 48 hours (about two to three weeks duration). Clotrimazole (brand name Lotrimin -NOT Lotrimin Ultra) is over-the-counter and is applied twice daily. You will find it in the anti-athlete's foot section, but you can apply it to skin on any part of the body.

On the scalp, ringworm causes hair loss where the rash occurs and treatment is not so straightforward.

On the scalp (tinea capitis), ringworm causes hair loss where the rash occurs and treatment is not so straightforward. Often the area has tiny broken hairs and some scale. Ringworm on the scalp requires a prescription oral antifungal medication for several weeks. The fungus on the scalp lives not only on the skin, but also in hair follicles. So, topical antifungals fail to reach the infection. Your doctor will also suggest a

shampoo which will not kill the fungus, but will temper any spread.

Sometimes a specimen is sent for lab testing- one part called a KOH stain comes back quickly, but is not definitive. The fungal culture is a better test but can take several weeks to return.

Spread

Dermatophytes generally spread through direct contact. Wrestling teams are often plagued with this infection. The furry friends your child sleeps with may also carry ringworm. If Fido, the dog, or Fi-fi, the cat has patches of hair loss, take them to the vet for diagnosis. Less often, dermatophytes are picked up through indirect contact such as walking barefoot on locker room floors.

If there is no improvement after a week or so of treatment, have your child's doctor reexamine the rash. Other diagnoses we keep in mind include eczema and granuloma annulare. And if the rash continues to enlarge and is flat, we consider Lyme.

Kids are allowed to attend school and daycare with ringworm once treatment is started, but wrestlers are advised to treat for 72 hours on skin and 14 days if on the scalp prior to returning and to cover any rash.

Luckily the fungus among us rarely gets humongous!

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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How to socialize your preschooler without preschool



Emma's parents were hopeful that Emma could start preschool this winter, but with the slow COVID-19 vaccine roll out, Emma's parents chose to keep her home just a little longer. Grandparents come over every day, but three-year-old Emma does not have interaction with other children. Her parents are confident that they can teach Emma shapes and numbers, but are concerned about her social and emotional development. For those in the same shoes as Emma's parents, we share ways to socialize your preschooler without preschool.

Preschool has not changed much since you were three or four years old. There is still circle time, show-and-tell, and cubbies to hang little coats in. And games, lots of fun and games. But as early childhood educators will tell you, there is a method to their madness. In particular, the fun and games encourage social and emotional growth.

Fun and games

Unlike a two year old, three and four-year-old children are capable of turn-taking and rule-following. These skills help preschoolers form friendships and learn to get along with others. At home, parents can teach their preschoolers simple games that involve turn-taking. Don't be tempted to bend the rules to allow your child to win every game of Candy Land®. Whether you lose or win, you will model "good winning" and "good losing." For instance, if you win, say "Good game!" If you lose, say "Oh, I lost, but I had fun playing!" Fast forward a few years and you can avoid having the kid who is a poor sport and can't move on from a loss.

Whenever you teach a new life skill, take turns. For example, as you teach them to set the table, say "I put the fork next to this plate, now you can put the fork next to THIS plate," Or, as you teach them to brush their teeth, take turns brushing. This will teach taking turns as well as also ensure shiny bright teeth.

Use manners

Children who say "Yes, please!" and "No, thank-you" endear themselves to others. When you teach your child manners, say "thank you" to your child. By saying "Thank you for putting your cup on the table and not the floor," and "Thank you for putting your clothes in the hamper" and "Thank you for helping me clean up this game," you build their confidence, and you model how to speak to others politely. Since children this age like to please their parents, your praise will motivate them to repeat the behavior.

Teach them to use their manners even with family members. When you teach that even family members deserve gratitude, fast forward to the teen years and you will have a teenager

thanking you for waking up early to make them pancakes in the morning.

Preschoolers are learning how to temper their tantrums

To help them with emotional development, label their negative emotions as you see them arise. For example: "You are so frustrated that the toy is not working correctly," or "You are sad because I said we cannot play outside right now." This allows them to feel what they feel and legitimizes them by giving their feelings a name. In the example above, if they lose the game of Candy Land® and start to tantrum, you can say, "You are disappointed that you lost this game, but we had such fun together. You might win the next game! Thank you for playing with me."

Resist the temptation at home to soothe emotions with food or cups of liquid. In times of calm, be sure to read books about emotions, or talk about the emotions of characters in books. Talk about how to display anger and frustration in acceptable ways. Except for the binkie suggestion, this post applies to preschoolers as well as toddlers who find cooling down after a tantrum difficult.

Show and tell

Show and tell gives kids the confidence to express themselves in front of others. Virtually connect with a cousin or other relatives and have your child talk about what they brought. Have your child reciprocate by listening and asking one or two questions to the others in the group. The internet is full of themes and suggestions for items.

Fast forward to elementary school, middle school or high school and your kid will be breezing through their powerpoint slide deck in front of an entire classroom of kids.

Kids love structure to their day

The purpose of circle time, a hallmark of the young child

classroom experience, is to give order to the day. Circle time organizes kids, and relieves anxiety. Just as teachers do, at the start of the day, review the day's plan. Keep in mind that children who are 3 and 4 cannot keep more than 3 or 4 items in mind at one time.

Circle time organizes kids, and relieves anxiety

For example, say during breakfast, "After breakfast, you can play with your puzzles while daddy cleans up, then we will play out in the yard, and then we will read books." Then after you read books, say, "Now that we are done reading, you can have time for free play while daddy does (some other task they need to do), then we will do laundry together and then have lunch." Side note: young children can empty a hamper into a basket, they can sort and fold clothes, and they can turn on and off the washer and dryer under your guidance. They enjoy mimicking you and like to spend time with you. Take advantage of that!

Other useful tools are the color alarm clocks (google to find a large assortment) which use colors to mark the passage of time. Do-it-yourself felt boards have pictures of weather or activities. While your child will not understand a full calendar, they will be happy to populate a "today" felt board and "tomorrow" felt board with activities.

Continue to pause throughout the day to remind your child what they just did and then a couple of things that come next. You will find that your child's day runs smoother than days without a plan.

A word about same-age friends

If you can find one other family with a child the same age as your preschooler who is quarantining the same way your family is, consider setting up playdates for the two children. In the age of this pandemic, it is best for playdates to occur

outside while wearing masks. Be sure to cancel if anyone has any illness symptoms or was exposed to anyone with COVID-19.

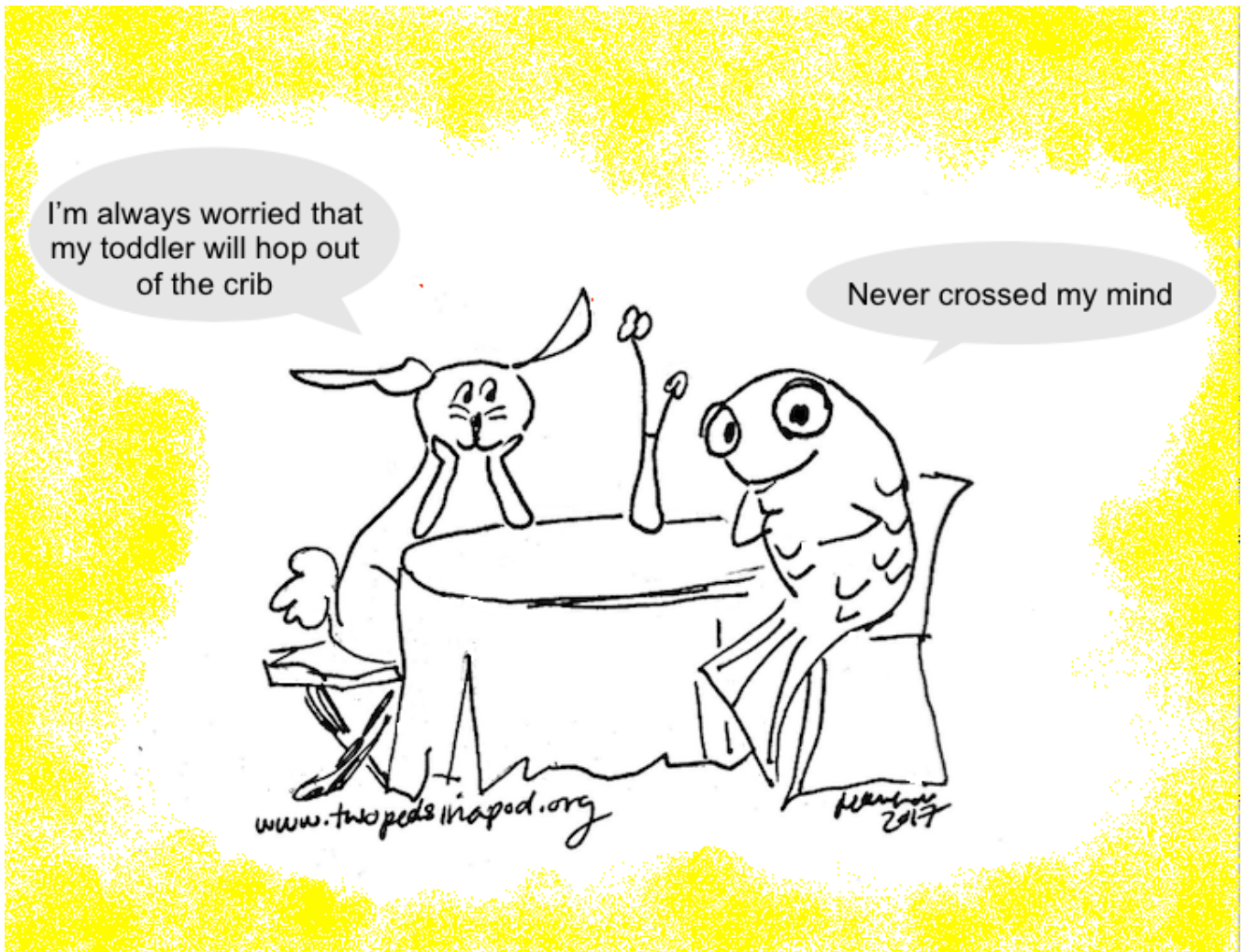
Unstructured play with one other child is just as valuable as a classroom full of others for your child to practice and enjoy socializing. Eventually the pandemic will end and you will feel safer sending your child to school. In the meantime, use these tips to help socialize your preschooler even when they are not in the classroom.

For more on three year olds, check out our post “Three’s the magic number” and this one that highlights four-year old development.

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How to move your child from crib to bed



A family asked, "My toddler figured out how to climb out of the crib! How do I transition him into a bed?"

Some kids never climb out of their cribs, but sometimes families need the crib for a new sibling. If this is the case, consider if you really need the crib right away. Using a bassinet for the new baby allows the big brother/sister to get used to having a baby around. Many older siblings regress after the birth of a sibling and it can be useful to keep the older one in a crib for just a little bit longer, then use the new bed as a reward for "helping" or as a token of increased status.

The scariest part of putting your

child into a bed is that your child now has access to his entire bedroom.

So if your child is NOT yet climbing out of the crib, do not rush to transition him out. You first need to childproof the bedroom. Crawl on your hands and knees to see what you can reach. For his safety, gate him into his room or keep the door closed. You may also need to gate the steps or gate a hallway to prevent him from wandering into more dangerous rooms, such as the kitchen, in the middle of the night. We know one family who found their child crawling around on the kitchen counters one morning. Know that open or closed bedroom doors likely do not impact potential fire safety. It is far more important make sure your smoke detectors work.

If you have no reason to break down the crib and your child goes to sleep easily in it, there is no harm in keeping him in his crib. However, once a child is able to climb out, a child is able to fall out. So...time to get out. For many toddlers, the ability to throw a leg over the side of the crib occurs around two years of age or when the toddler reaches three feet tall.

If your child is potty trained at this point, he will find it easier to get to the bathroom at night if he is in a bed rather than a crib. On the other hand, many kids who are fully potty trained during the day continue to wet the bed for years, so don't wait for dry overnight diapers to put your child into a bed. Just protect the bed mattress with a water-proof liner until your child masters night time dryness.

How to start the transition?

You can talk up sleeping in a big boy/big girl bed “just like Mommy and Daddy.” Let your toddler pick out sheets or buy him ones you know he will love. For example, choose sheets in a favorite color, or with favorite characters. Supply a pillow and blanket. But if he is used to a crib without bedding, expect the blanket or pillow to end up off the bed. You might want to continue warm pajamas until a blanket stays on. Sometimes kids want a small “kid’s sized” blanket, but sometimes a larger blanket is more apt to stay on the bed.

While kids are often excited by their new bed, remember that toddlers are creatures of habit.

Their excitement might lead them to nap enthusiastically in the bed but then they may want their crib at night. Or they might fight their naps now- remember that many children give up napping between the ages of 2-5 years. If space allows, consider leaving the crib set up for the first week of sleeping in the new bed, then break down the crib once you have several successful naps and overnights in the bed.

Some kids may invite a “friend” or two into his bed.

Some sleep with stuffed animals, a pacifier, or in the case of one of Dr. Kardos’s kids, a soft Philadelphia Eagles football. Many kids fall asleep with toy cars clutched in their hands. If these friends help your child sleep better, then allow the slumber party.

Falling out of bed is common. For his first week in a bed, Dr Kardos’s first son was always found sleeping peacefully in the

middle of his room on the carpet after they tucked him into his bed for the night. You can place a carpet or pillow next to the bed so when the inevitable falling overboard occurs, your child has a softer landing.

You could shorten the distance to the ground by placing a mattress, or a mattress plus the box spring, directly on the floor.

Then when your child has gone for a few weeks without falling off the mattress, “build up the bed” onto the standard bedframe.

Alternatively, your child can sleep in a bed with side rails. Note that portable side rails are made for use only on adult beds, NOT for toddler beds or bunk beds. You can find guidelines for preventing injury from side rails here. Rails are designed for children aged two to five years who are capable of getting in and out of an adult bed by themselves. According to safety guidelines published by Consumer Reports in 2010, “Be sure they (the rails) fit tightly with no gaps between the mattress and the rail, so that your child can’t get stuck. Leave at least 9 inches between the bed rail and the footboard and headboard of the bed.” The wall is not a bed rail substitute because a child can get trapped between the wall and the mattress.

Decide if you will teach your child to call out to you or to teach him to come into your bedroom if he

needs you in the middle of the night.

For everyone's safety, be sure no clothes or clutter between his bed and yours can cause tripping in the dark. A night light in the bathroom helps as well.

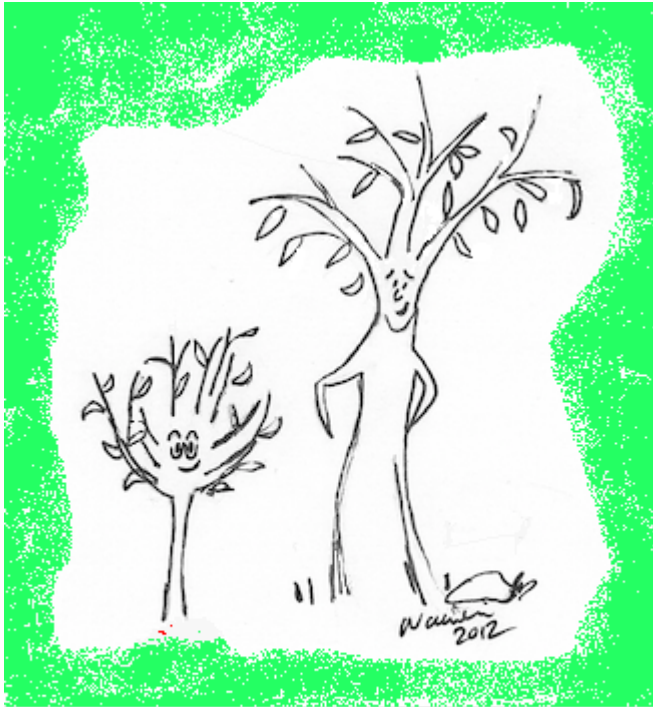
If your child pops out of bed immediately after tucking him in, teach him how to self-calm and fall asleep in his own bed. Continue to walk him back to bed in a caring manner with minimal conversation besides: "I love you, good night."

Now your child's bedtime story will really include a bed! (For instance [click here](#))

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High calorie foods for underweight children



You need to eat more. You look like a stick!

Your child's pediatrician charts your child's height and weight in order to determine whether he is growing appropriately. Some kids are underweight. These kids use more calories than they take in.

Here are ways to increase calories. Remember, it's not as simple as demanding that your child eat more of her noodles. Instead of trying to stuff more food into your child, increase the caloric umph behind each meal.

Make every bite count:

- Mix baby cereal with breast milk or formula, not juice or water.
- After weaning from formula or breast milk at a year of age, give whole milk until two years, longer if your pediatrician recommends this. Cow's milk has more calories than rice, oat, or nut milks.

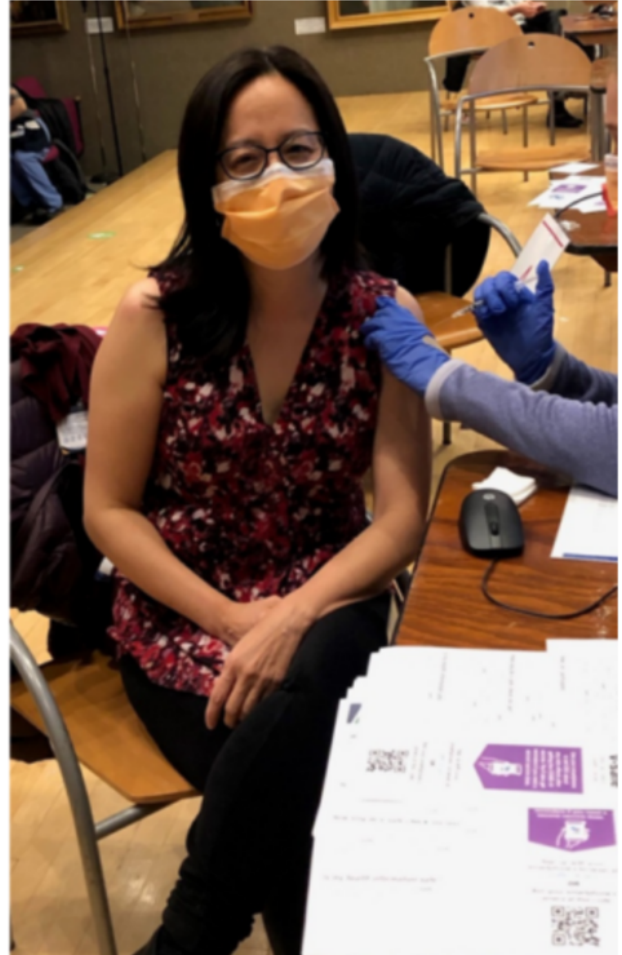
- Add Carnation Breakfast Essentials to milk.
- Add Smart Balance, butter, or olive oil to cooked vegetables, pasta, rice, and hot cereal.
- Dip fruit into whole milk yogurt
- Dip vegetables into cheese sauce or ranch dressing
- Offer avocado and banana over less caloric fruits such as grapes (which contain only one calorie per grape).
- Cream cheese is full of calories and flavor: smear some on raw veggies, whole wheat crackers, or add some to a jelly sandwich.
- Peanut butter and other nut-butters are great ways to add calories as well as protein to crackers, sandwiches, and cereal.
- If your child is old enough to eat nuts without choking (as least 3 years), a snack of nuts provides more calories and nutrition than crackers.
- For your older child, feed hardy “home style foods.” Give mac ‘n cheese instead of pasta with tomato sauce.
- In general, any form of meat (chicken, fish, or other meat) is more calorically dense than most other foods.
- Mix granola into yogurt.
- Give a hard boiled egg or pieces of cheese as a snack.
- For those who don’t like plain egg, try French toast!
- Give milkshakes in place of milk (no raw eggs!).
- Choose a muffin over a piece of toast.
- Butter their waffles and pancakes before serving.

Have your child’s pediatrician exclude medical reasons of poor weight gain with a thorough history and physical exam before you assume poor weight gain is from low caloric intake.

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When will kids get a COVID-19 vaccine?



As the year 2020 comes to a close, we are grateful, as pediatricians caring for your children, that we received our first doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

There is hope! COVID-19 vaccines have arrived and more than two million adults have safely received a vaccine. Now that vaccinations are reaching adults, many families wonder when COVID-19 vaccines will be available for their children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended a stepwise approach to vaccinating everyone, starting with healthcare workers and adults most vulnerable to

contracting COVID-19, then eventually providing vaccinations to everyone. Children under the age of 16 years will likely be last to receive vaccines.

Children under 16 years

Of the two Food and Drug Administration approved COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, Pfizer-BioNtech's vaccine is authorized for ages 16 and up and Moderna's vaccine is authorized for those ages 18 and up. For kids 12 years old and up, trials are still ongoing. Pfizer-BioNtech began trials in October and Moderna began earlier this month. With this in mind, vaccines for tween and teens will probably not be available for months. Since trials have not started for younger children, expect vaccine availability to take even longer.

If you are interested in trial enrollments check here: Moderna's trial and Pfizer-BioNtech.

For now, the vaccination of adults may provide some protection to children until they too can receive the vaccine. Until then, we will continue to wear masks, distance, and wash hands often.

Please stay vigilant with your children. As some of our patients have learned all too painfully, best friends and close relatives can innocently carry the virus causing COVID-19. Remember, COVID-19 can look like a common cold. Although only one percent of children who contract Sars-Cov-2, require intensive care, the disease has caused 154 deaths and more than 7,500 hospitalizations as of Dec. 3 for those 19 years old and younger in the United States.

We are optimistic that in 2021, as more and more folks get vaccinated, we will move closer to containing COVID-19.

Wishing you all a Happy and HEALTHY New Year in 2021!

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Dry, cracked hands: treatment and prevention



In addition to pocket-sized hand sanitizer, I recently got my kids pocket-sized moisturizer to help their dry, cracked hands.

Between diligent handwashing and falling temperatures in Pennsylvania, we are experiencing annoying, itchy skin changes. We've blogged about this before-Dr. Lai and I are used to washing our hands twice for every patient we see in the office-once before examining them and once again afterward. I have a jar of moisturizer on my desk that I frequently dip into between patients. Now I remind my kids to do the same between hand washings.

Here are some remedies to help treat dry, cracked hands:

- Petroleum jelly, such as Vaseline or Aquaphor, works great to moisturize and heal cracks in the skin. Apply at bedtime. Ointments are greasy, so during the day your kids might prefer using a fragrance-free moisturizing

cream such as CeraVe or Aveeno.

- If itchy, add hydrocortisone 1% ointment to your kids' daily or twice daily hand-care regime. Sometimes, for kids with underlying eczema, pediatricians prescribe a stronger type of hydrocortisone to help with more severe skin cracking and itching from dryness. Ointment tends to sting less than cream.
- Mix equal parts of moisturizing ointment and hydrocortisone ointment, smear, and put socks over hands to lock in moisture. This works best as a bedtime routine to help decrease the subconscious scratching and picking that occurs during sleep.

- Also stop the itch by giving your child an oral antihistamine such as cetirizine (Zyrtec).

Of course, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Here are ways to prevent dry, cracked hands:

- Encourage your children to wear gloves or mittens when outside in cold weather. This shields skin from drying out.
- Apply moisturizer to hands before leaving the house every day.
- Keep moisturizer next to all sinks in the house to remind your kids to moisturize after handwashing. Their hands do not have to be completely dry before applying the moisturizer- in fact, moisturizing cream can better get into skin when skin is damp.
- In contrast, if using hand sanitizer, wait until the skin is dry before applying the moisturizer.
- Wash hands in cool or lukewarm water, not hot water. Just like hot water washes oil off a frying pan, hot water will wash off your skin's natural oils and leave

them drier.

Remember, lizard skin is for lizards, not for your children!

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Holiday Gifts for school-age kids 2020



Holidays 2020 style: Oops. I must have been wearing my mask when I told your grandmother that you wanted a “new fur cat.”

I think she heard “new fur hat.”

We’re bringing back our popular holiday gift guide based on ages and developmental stages. As always, we will concentrate on non electronic options, as well as pandemic-friendly ideas.

Kindergarten:

What’s happening: Kids at this age can hop up and down on one foot and they start having a better sense of time. They tell simple stories, can tell real from make-believe and can swing and climb.

Ideas: Clocks, calendars, and games that require some balance like Twister® are all hits. Games with simple rules such as checkers and puzzles with large pieces are developmentally within reach. They may enjoy reading books with very simple sentences on their own. Foster creativity with colored papers, crayons, markers, stickers, and water-color paints.

Younger elementary school (the little kids):

What’s happening: This group is now more self sufficient. For instance eight year olds can perform self help skills such as tooth brushing entirely on their own. They start to understand quantities and therefore concepts such as money. They display more concern for others and understand team work.

Ideas: make every-day-living activities fun. For instance, give a basket of interesting scented shampoos, or an assortment of toothpastes with a toothbrush that plays a tune. Give wallets or piggy banks (hold on the Venmo account!). Basic sports equipment of any sort will be a hit. Label makers will also appeal to this age group since they have a greater sense of ownership. This age transitions from learning -to -read to reading-to-learn. In other words, they start to cull information from reading. Give age-appropriate non-fiction

books about an area of interest to them.

Older elementary school (the big kids):

What's happening: Fine motor skills are quite developed and intricate arts and crafts such as weaving kits can be manipulated. They are more aware of their bodies as puberty approaches. As peer relationships become more complex, they also experience more peer pressure.

Ideas: If you are a long distance relative, research online some of the things you enjoyed doing as a kid and send out ahead of time some materials such as a set of balloon animals or a deck of cards. Then give the gift of a lesson over Zoom on how to make crazy balloon critters or magic card tricks. No time to send anything out? Give the gift of how to make cat's cradle variants with random string or how to fold paper airplanes. Your nephew probably outgrew the bike from a couple years ago, so consider replacing it with a larger one. Age-appropriate books about historic figures can give kids ideas for role models. The big kids are also fans of joke and riddle books.

Middle school/Junior high (the tweens):

What's happening: With increased attention spans (30-40 minutes) they can work on activities for a longer period of time. They pay more attention to body image, looks, and clothes. Complex thought emerges and they can better express feelings verbally.

These kids can cook, really cook.

Ideas: These kids can cook, really cook. Just look at Chopped Junior. Get them the culinary tools you covet. Also, any building project, whether it's for a model of baby Yoda, or a back yard rocket, will be appreciated. Harmonicas, ukuleles, and keyboards can be self-taught online, are not very expensive, and can give tweens an artistic and emotional

outlet. Tweens also value their privacy – consider a present of a journal with a lock or a doorbell for her room.

High School (the teens):

Whats happening: As teens gain more independence and responsibility, often they take on a job outside of the home. They continue to develop their capacity for caring, sharing and for deeper more intimate relationships.

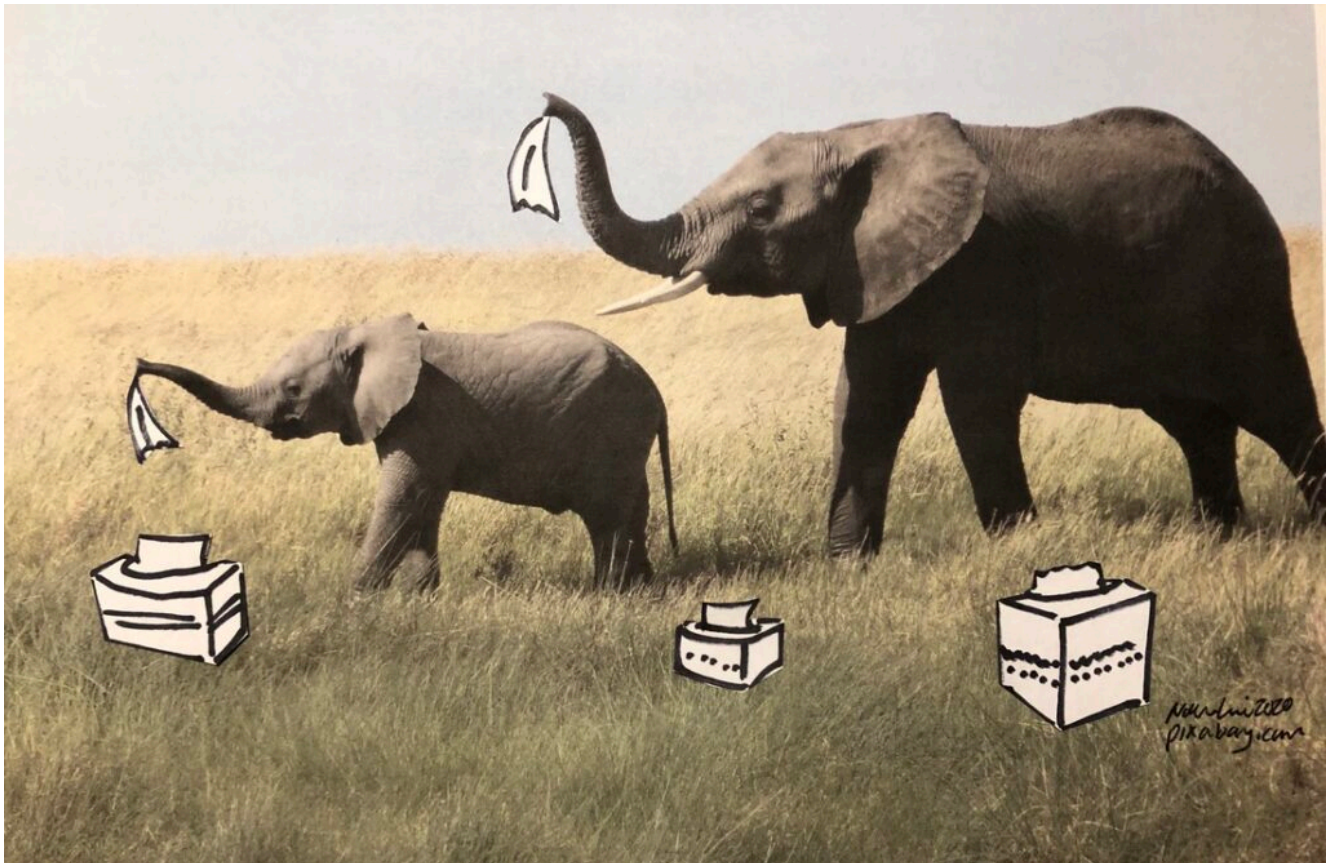
Ideas: If you look at factors which build a teen into a resilient adult, you will see that adult involvement in a child's life is important. We know parents who jokingly say they renamed their teens "Door 1" and "Door 2," since they spend more time talking to their kids' bedroom doors than their kids. Create opportunities for one-on-one interaction by giving gifts such as a day of socially distanced shopping with their aunt, or two hours kayaking with their dad. Adolescence is the age of abstract thinking and self awareness– Google "room decorating led lights" or "wall decals" and find a plethora of inexpensive ways to jazz up their room or another room in the house.

Enjoy the holiday season!

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Is it COVID or a cold?



Viral lamentations: imagine an elephant's woes when a cold ends up in their nose

In the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can no longer say easily that your child with cold symptoms has a simple cold. Pre-pandemic, it was so easy to say, "Of course they can go to school with a cold. Most kids can participate and be perfectly happy despite their stuffy nose or mild cough." We pediatricians often spent time reassuring parents about colds.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 (COVID) infections, is one of many viruses that mainly attack the airways. Most of the viruses cause similar initial symptoms, making it difficult to distinguish one from another. COVID, just like other illnesses, can appear like an innocent-seeming cough, runny nose and a mild fever. Determining if your child has COVID or a cold is trickier than knowing how to tell the difference between a cold and the flu.

"COVID in children can look just like a simple cold."

Because it is so difficult to tell the difference between COVID or a “regular” cold, your pediatrician may ask you to assume that your child has SARS-CoV-2 and advise them to undergo testing and/or to keep them home. Since they might have COVID, you don’t want your child to pass it along to someone else. A child with COVID could pass it to a child with underlying health conditions. Or their teacher. Or another kid who is otherwise healthy, but then passes it to their own parent who has diabetes. Or to their grandparent who lives with them.

A negative COVID test in your sick child is reassuring. Then you know that their cold may be from another virus, such as rhinovirus or RSV. In this case, after taking into account all factors, your pediatrician might say that your child may go back to school or daycare if their symptoms are improving. However, even if your pediatrician gives the green light, whenever practical, try to keep your children home until that last booger has dried and any cough is gone. If some other child gets a cold, their family will be in the same quandary as yours over the need to test for COVID or isolate/quarantine. (See CDC guidelines [here](#)) Besides, even “common colds” can lead to complications, and no one needs more complications in 2020.

The good news

- Masking, distancing, and keeping your child home when sick should limit the spread of even simple colds. These practices can decrease the number of times your family members will need to stay home and quarantine.
- Vaccine studies to prevent covid are happening right now.
- Research into medicine to mitigate the effects of COVID illness is happening right now.

While we cannot rush the science, at least the scientific research that will advance our understanding of COVID is well

underway.

In the meantime, please continue to laugh and have fun with your children. We have always said “Don’t get sick,” NOT “Don’t have fun.” Hopefully our new temporary disease-preventing habits of wearing masks and distancing will prevent ALL illness this year, whether COVID or not.

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How superheroes wear masks



Superheroes don't wear masks just over their eyes when they fight germs.

Every child, long before COVID, was taught to prevent germs from entering their bodies by washing their hands and making sure their nose did not get too close to other kids' noses. As we've always said, "You don't want someone's boogers to jump into your nose." Besides distancing, wearing a mask is just another way to prevent those boogers from jumping in or out of noses. But most people are unfamiliar with wearing masks and are not sure how to teach their kids to wear them.

Enter superheroes. As we know, superheroes wear masks. Above is a photo of one of Dr. Lai's favorite superheroes, along side other mask-wearing superheroes. Her superhero sister is an ER doctor. She wears layers to keep herself from bringing home COVID to her own kids. She works in this garb for hours and hours. We borrow from her hints for helping your kids do

the same with their masks:

- **Cover both your child's nose and mouth with the mask.** The path for a germ to enter and exit the lungs is through BOTH the mouth and nose...it's all connected. If the mask has a wire at the top part of the mask, pinch it over your child's nose and press gently over the tops of their cheeks. This helps prevent glasses from fogging and also limits germs from coming and going through leaky areas of the mask.
- **Have your child talk, sing, and jump up and down in their mask before leaving the house.** We have seen many a mask wiggle down a kid's (or parent's) face as they start to talk. It's like watching a game of chutes and ladder...the mask goes up a little, and down a little, and sometimes it slides right off.
- **If the mask seems too big, try tying the loop with a small knot.** The secret is to fold the mask in half (lengthwise) with the outsides facing each other and tie a knot close to where the strings meet the paper/fabric. Then pop it back open and tuck the corners in. This works best with a paper mask. Note, masks are not recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for those under two years old. Check out other kids who should not wear masks here.
- **Some kids will complain about the mask.** It can be a comfort issue, a fashion issue, or a habit issue. They are just not accustomed to wearing a mask and over time they will get used to it. If comfort were the only goal of kid fashion, gel light-up princess shoes would not exist! Practice having all of your family members wear a mask around the house before venturing out. Also, try your child's mask on yourself. Maybe the material really is "stinky" or "pinchy" and it's time for a different mask.
- **Once a mask is on, teach kids to pull up a mask from the sides or near their cheeks, not near their nose.** Again,

you want them to avoid touching their boogers.

- **Taking off a mask correctly is as important as putting one on.** When taking off a mask have them wash their hands with soap and water and then gently take their mask off at the ears. If their hands are not washed and they touch their mask around their nose, there is the potential for germy droplets on their hands to jump into their nose.
- **If you find that ear loops are chafing your child behind the ears or over the cheeks,** moisturize an hour before wearing. If you moisturize right before putting on the mask, there is the risk that the mask will slide around. There are all sorts of methods to hook the loops to places other than behind the ears. You can sew buttons on a headband and secure the loops to the buttons or secure the loops to glasses. There are also mask extenders available. Use non-comedogenic (non-acne-producing) lotions such as Cervave®, Cetaphil®, or moisturizers meant for faces only.
- **If cloth, wash the mask in soap and water when they get home.** There is no need to torch the mask with high heat or douse in a special chemical. A good wash with soap and air drying for a day will kill off germs- COVID and other germs as well.
- **Paper masks need to breathe.** Most are technically one time use, but let's get real, we know that you will use them more than once. Store them in paper lunch bags-fold the masks so the outside (germy side) is touching together.
- **One final tip: COMPLIMENT your child's proper mask wearing!** Dr. Kardos is often overheard exclaiming to her patients: "I LOVE your mask! It is so COOL! Do you like MINE? See how I wear it LIKE A SUPERHERO?" It is fun to watch the kids immediately put on their masks if they were initially off, and to pull it up over their noses correctly to mirror Dr. Kardos if they had been wearing the mask improperly.

What better barrier against nose spew than wearing a mask? Have your kids wear them in superhero style. Until this pandemic is under control, mask wearing will play a huge role in keeping your children safer from disease spread.

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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Tick removal and prevention



The classic bullseye rash of Lyme

Kids are running about and so are the ticks. We're talking

about tick removal and prevention of tick bites in the
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Tip of the Week!

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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