

# Hail to Kale



Crunching on kale

*Resolved to eat more vegetables this year? Our pediatrician gardener Dr. Marion Mass shares with us the benefits of kale and how to prepare it so your kids will eat it.*

Open one of those ubiquitous “Ten Superfoods” articles and kale is sure to be somewhere on the list. Are there really

nutritional benefits to stuffing this leafy green into our pie holes? And can I easily grow kale myself? The answers are 'yes' and 'yes,' both emphatic!

Just one cup of cooked kale provides 100% of the US RDA of vitamin K, 70% of vitamin C, 10% of Vitamin B6, fiber, and calcium, and 7% of iron. Not much iron, you say? Au contraire, dear parent. The absorption of iron is enhanced by vitamin C, so that 7% is much more available to your child's body. This information is especially pertinent for female teens, whose iron and calcium intake are likely to be deficient.

In addition, kale houses 45 different flavonoids, which are molecules with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. One of these, a carotenoid, is selectively absorbed into the retina of the eye and protects against age-related macular problems. If that's not enough, kale (especially when steamed) has been proven to reduce the risk of five cancers: breast, colon, ovarian, prostate and bladder.

While beloved broccoli boasts many of the same nutritional benefits, kale wins the flavonoid content by a mile. Do not misunderstand... there is virtue in all veggies. I do not advocate eating kale nightly, just making it a regular part of you and your child's diet.

Now what if I told you that even in my home state, frosty Pennsylvania, we are still picking kale from our garden and will be for another month? Kale, especially The Red Russian variety, and the Tuscan, (also called lacinto or dinosaur kale) is one of the most winter-hardy vegetables in existence. We plant a fall crop in mid August located where we have just dug up our potatoes. (Come to think of it, I should plant a spring crop in early April as well.) We start picking the outer leaves in October. The plant keeps producing new leaves from the center. Frost comes and sweetens the flavor. Snow comes, and Kale still grows! Throw a row cover over the top, and you get an additional 4-6 weeks of harvest after the

really cold weather sets in.

While easy to plant, Kale has its enemies. Aphids love it, and cabbage worms take a bite. Both can be combated by the release of beneficial insects: ladybugs, lacewings and praying mantises. Thanks to my friends at Gardeners Supply Company for carrying all three insects.

**How to get your kid to eat Kale?** Ah, there's the rub. Start with that dinosaur variety. Age 3-6 is what I call 'the modern age of dinosaurs.' Use your child's love of the extinct beasts to your advantage! Dinosaur kale not only looks like a plant that would live in ancient times, but the deep ribbing looks like the skin of an ankylosaurus. Tell the little darlings they will be as tough as T-Rex if they eat it. Does little Emily like salad? Why not make it with kale added in, or even as the main ingredient? Remember the anti-inflammatory properties of the flavonoids mentioned above? Sick that fact on your aching adolescent athlete. After suffering two different inflammation-related problems this past cross-country season, my son practically inhales the stuff.

Look at the recipes below. You might want to work up to the kale salad with beets, pepitas and golden raisins. Or just take it to a grown up potluck. Judging from the reactions from the two places I've taken it, it may be the best thing I've created in my kitchen.

For all recipes, de-stem the kale by holding the stem at its base, use your thumb and index finger to peel the dark green part away from the stem. Always thoroughly wash and salad spin dry kale before use in the following recipes.

### **Kale Caesar or Kale Vinagrette**

1 bunch kale stemmed and torn into salad sized pieces  
1 bottle Caesar dressing  
juice of  $\frac{1}{2}$  orange or 1 lemon  
croutons

parmesan

Prep as you would a regular salad. The citrus juice cuts the bitter taste of the kale. Don't like Caesar? Dress your kale with a sweetly flavored balsamic (fig, orange or cherry is nice), lemon juice salt and olive oil.

### **Kale Chips, the easy kind**

1 bunch of kale de-stemmed and ripped into pieces  
2 tbsp olive oil  
salt

Preheat oven to 300F. Massage the olive oil into the kale on a large rimmed baking sheet, sprinkle with salt. Option: add cumin, cayenne, curry, or any favorite spice! Bake for 10 minutes, stir, bake for an additional 10 until edges are turning golden.

### **Kale chips that have more protein, but take more effort**

1 bunch of kale stemmed and torn into pieces  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup garbanzo bean flour\*  
pinch of salt  
juice of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lemon  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water  
2 tbsp olive oil  
optional add ins: pinch of cayenne, pinch of turmeric, pinch of cumin

Preheat oven to 300F. Brush a parchment lined cookie sheet with olive oil. Mix flour with salt, add spices, stir in lemon juice and water. Should be like thin pancake batter. Dip kale pieces in batter and place on cookie sheet. Bake 15 minutes, turn over with tongs, bake an additional 10-15 minutes. Kale will crisp as it cools.

### **Kale, bean, and sausage soup**

1 cup dried beans, soaked overnight cooked until tender

(cranberry or roman are my fave)

2 tbsp olive oil

2 medium onions, diced

1 tbsp minced garlic

1 lb sausage (we like Bolton's local turkey sausage) cut into small pieces

2 bunches kale de-stemmed and chopped

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp dried thyme

8 cups your favorite stock

Sauté onions in olive oil until pale gold, add garlic and sauté for 1 minute, add sausage and cook until it's edges are brown. Add kale and thyme, pour in broth and cook for 30 minutes, add beans during last 10 minutes. Salt to taste.

### Kale and Quinoa Salad with Beets and Pepitas

2 bunches kale, de-stemmed and cut into ribbon thin pieces

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup quinoa, cooked as per package directions (red looks best and has best taste)

5 medium beets, cooked until fork tender and cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch cubes

juice of 1 lemon

2 cloves minced garlic

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup crumbled cheese (your choice, blue, goat or queso fresco)

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup pumpkin seeds (pepitas), toast them in pan, they taste better

salt

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil

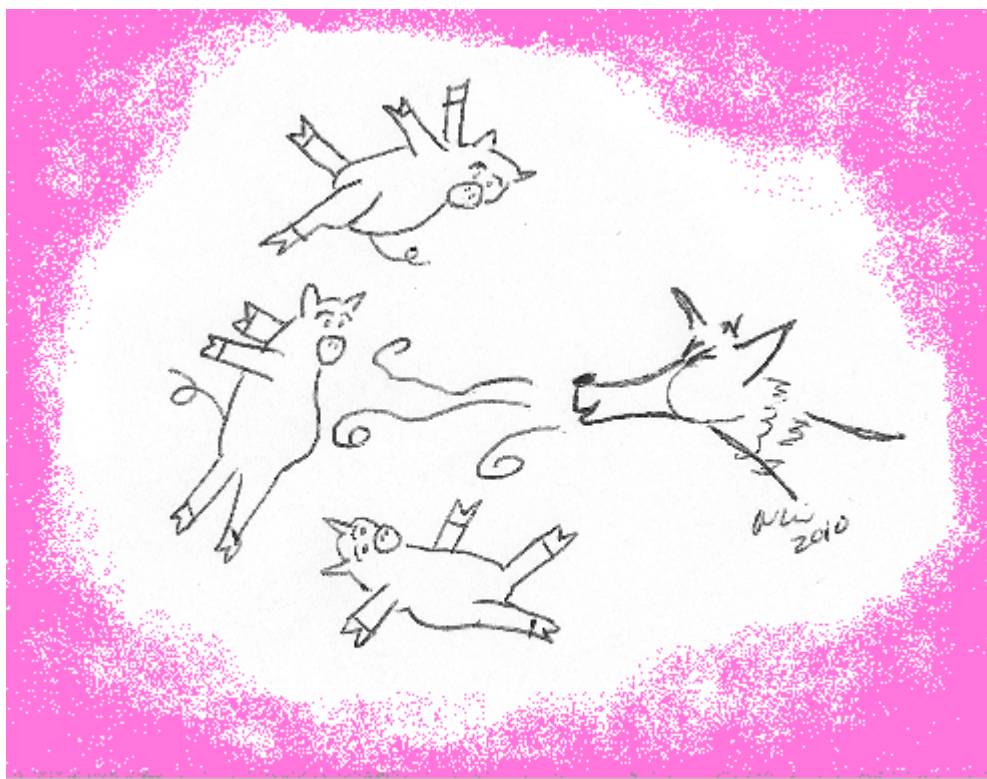
Mix first 5 ingredients, toss in rest just before serving. I make this from leftover quinoa and beets that I have cooked the night before. Less work!

Marion Mass MD, FAAP

In practice for 17 years, Marion Mass MD, FAAP graduated from Penn State and Duke University Medical School. She completed her pediatric residency at Northwestern University's Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Currently Dr. Mass works at Jellinek Pediatrics in Doylestown, PA and serves on the Wellness Council of the Central Bucks School District, PA. Produce from her kids' garden garnishes the plates of many local families as well as the plates of the restaurant Puck. All garden profits benefit Relay for Life. ☐ When she is not in her home garden, you can find her also tending to her son's middle school garden.

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## Asthma meds made simple



*Few people, and no pigs, knew B.B. Wolf had asthma*

A mom wrinkles her brow and hands me a bulging bag of inhalers. "Which medicine is the 'quick fix' inhaler? And which medicine is the 'controller' inhaler?" she asks.

Perfecting a treatment regimen for a child with asthma initially can be tricky and confusing for parents. But don't panic. There are simple medication schedules and environmental changes which not only thwart asthma flare ups, but also keep lungs calm between episodes. The goal is to abolish all symptoms of asthma such as cough, wheeze, and chest tightness.

### **For asthma flares**

**Albuterol (brand names Proair, Proventil, Ventolin) or levalbuterol (brand name Xopenex): These are the "quick fix" medications.** When inhaled, this medicine works directly on the lungs by opening up the millions of tiny airways constricted during an attack. Albuterol is given via nebulizer or inhaler. A nebulizer machine aerosolizes albuterol and pipes a mist of medicine into a child's lungs through a mask or mouth piece.

For kids who use inhalers, we provide a spacer, a clear plastic tube about the size of a toilet paper tube, which suspends the medication and gives the child time to breathe in the medication slowly. Without a spacer, the administration technique can be tricky and even adults use inhalers incorrectly.

**Prednisone/prednisolone (brand names include Prelone, Orapred):** Given orally in the form of pills or liquid, this steroid medicine acts to decrease inflammation inside the lungs. This kind of steroid is not the same kind used illegally in athletics. While steroids in the short term can cause side effects such as belly pain and behavior changes, the advantages of improving breathing greatly outweigh these temporary and reversible side effects. However, if your child has received a couple rounds of steroids in the past year, talk to your pediatrician about preventative measures to avoid the long term side effects of continual steroid use.

**Quick environmental changes** One winter a few years ago, a new live Christmas tree triggered an asthma attack in my patient. The only way he felt comfortable breathing in his own home was



for the family to get rid of the dusty tree. Smoke and perfume can also spasm lungs. If you know Aunt Mildred smells like a flower factory, run away from her suffocating hug. Kids should avoid smoking and avoid being around others who smoke.

### **For asthma prevention**

Taking preventative, or **controller** medicines for asthma is like taking a vitamin. They are not “quick fixes” but they can calm lungs and prevent asthma symptoms when used over time.

**Inhaled steroids** (For example, Flovent, Pulmicort, Qvar) work directly on lungs and do not cause the side effects of oral steroids because they are not absorbed into the rest of the body. These medicines work over time to stop mucus buildup inside the lungs so that the lungs are not as sensitive to triggers such as cold viruses.

**Monteleukoclast** (brand name Singulair), also used to treat nasal allergies, limits the number and severity of asthma attacks as well by decreasing inflammation. It comes as a tiny pill kids chew or swallow daily.

**Avoid allergy triggers and respiratory irritants** such as smoke. Even if you smoke a cigarette outside, smoke clings to clothing and your child can be affected. Treating allergy symptoms with appropriate medication will help avoid asthma attacks as well.

**Treat acid reflux appropriately.** Sometimes asthma is triggered by reflux, or heartburn. If stomach acid refluxes back up into the food pipe (esophagus), that acid could tickle your child's airways which lie next to the esophagus.

**Avoid respiratory viruses and the flu.** Teach your child good hand washing techniques and get yearly flu shots. Parents should schedule their children's flu vaccines as soon as the vaccines are available.

Some parents are familiar with asthma because they grew up



with the condition themselves, but these parents should know that health care providers treat asthma in kids differently than in adults. For example, asthma is one of the few examples where medicine such as albuterol can be dosed higher in young children than in adults. Also some treatment guidelines have been improved upon recently and may differ from how parents managed their own asthma as children. For example, a doctor friend now in his 50's said his parent used to give him a substance to induce vomiting during his asthma attacks. After vomiting, the adrenaline rush would open up his airways.

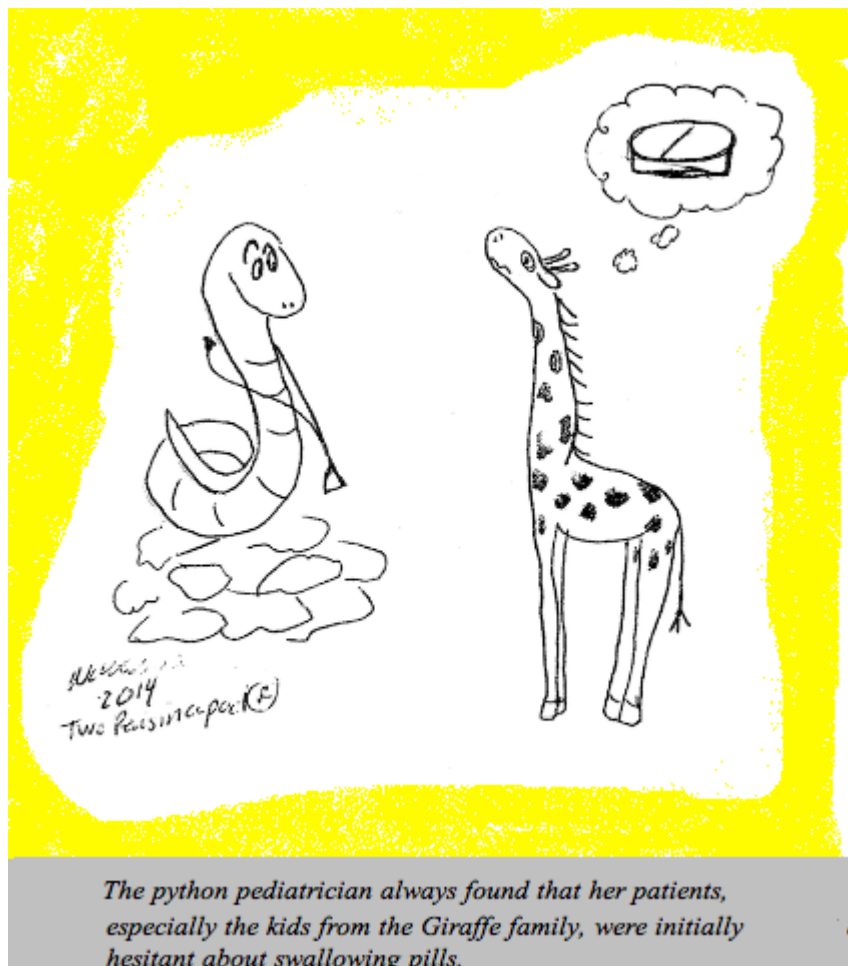
Don't do that. We can do better. Hopefully now that flu season has descended upon us, this information helps you to keep your child's asthma under good control and helps you know which medicine to reach for when it flares up.

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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## **Tough to swallow: hints on giving your child medicine**



Does your kid spit out all medicine? Clamp her jaws shut at the sight of the antibiotic bottle? Refuse to take pain medicine when she clearly has a bad headache or sore throat?

Sometimes medicine is optional but sometimes it's not. Here are some ways to help the medicine go down:

Don't make a fuss. We mean PARENTS: don't make a fuss. Stay calm. Explain that you are giving your child medicine for ... fill in the blank... reason, calmly give her the pill to swallow or the medicine cup or syringe filled and have her suck it down, then offer water to drink. If you make a BIG DEAL or warn about the taste or try to hurry your child along, she may become suspicious, stubborn or flustered herself. Calmness begets calm.

### **What if she hates the taste?**

- Most medication can be given with a little chocolate syrup or applesauce (yes, Mary Poppins had the right idea). Check with your child's pharmacist if your child's particular prescription can be given this way.
- Often, your pharmacist can add flavor to your child's

prescription.

- Check if your child's medicine comes in pill form so she doesn't have to taste it at all.
- Try "chasing" the medicine down with chocolate milk instead of water to wash away a bad taste quicker.
- Use a syringe (no needle of course) to slowly put tiny bits of liquid medicine in the pocket between her outer teeth and her cheek. Sooner or later she will swallow. After all, she swallows her own saliva. ( A factoid: an adult swallows up to 1.5 liters of saliva a day.)

**DON'T MIX** the medication in a full bottle of liquid if you are administering medication to a baby. There is a good chance that the baby will not finish the bottle and therefore the baby will not finish the medication. Also, some medications will no longer work if they are dissolved in a liquid.

**WHAT IF SHE THROWS UP THE MEDICATION?** Call your child's doctor, if the medication was not in the stomach for more than 15 minutes, we will often not count it as a dose and may instruct you give another dose.

**WHAT IF SHE CAN'T SWALLOW PILLS?** If your child can swallow food, she can swallow a pill. Dense liquids such as milk carry pills down the food pipe more smoothly than water. Start with swallowing a grain of rice or a tic-tac. For many kids, it is hard to shake the sequence of biting then swallowing. Face it. You spent a lot of time when she was toddler hovering over her as she stuffed Cheerios in her mouth, muttering "bite-chew-chew-swallow." Now that you want her to swallow in one gulp, she is balking. Luckily, most medication in pills, although bitter tasting, will still work if you tell your child to take one quick bite and then swallow. The exception is a capsule. The gnashing of little teeth will deactivate the microbeads in a capsule release system. If you are not sure, ask your pharmacist. For more ideas, read our prior post on How to swallow pills.

**WHAT IF ALL ATTEMPTS AT ORAL MEDICINE FAIL?** Talk to your child's doctor. Some liquid antibiotics come in shot form and your pediatrician can inject the medicine (such as penicillin), and some come in suppository form; Tylenol (generic name acetaminophen) is an example. You can buy rectal Tylenol if sore throat pain or mouth sores prevent swallowing or if your child simply is stubborn. Sometimes you just have to have one adult hold the child and another to pry open her mouth, insert medicine, then close her mouth again.

**HAVE AN EAR DROP HATER?** First walk around with the bottle in your pocket to warm the drops up. Cold drops in an ear are very annoying. (In fact, if cold liquid is poured into the ear a reflex occurs that causes the eyes beat rapidly back and forth). Use distraction. Turn on a movie or age-appropriate TV show, have your child lie down on the couch on her side with the affected ear facing up. Pull the outside of her ear up and outward to make the ear opening more accessible, then insert the drops and let her stay lying down watching her show for about 10 minutes. If you need to treat both ears, have her flip to the other side of the couch, affected ear up, and repeat. Another option: treat your child while she sleeps.

**AFRAID OF EYE DROPS?** If your child is like Dr. Kardos who is STILL eye-drop phobic as a grown-up, try one of two ways to instill eye drops. Have your child lie down, have one person distract and cause your child to look to one side, insert the drop into the side of the eye that your child is looking AWAY from. She will blink and distribute the medicine throughout the eye.

ALTERNATIVELY, have your child close her eyes and turn her head slightly TOWARD the eye you need to treat. Instill 2 drops, rather than one, into the corner of her eye nearest her nose. Then have her open her eyes and turn her head slowly back to midline: the drops should drop right into her eye. Repeat for the second eye if needed.

**HATE CREAM?** Some kids need medicated cream applied to

various skin conditions. And some kids hate the feeling of goop on their skin. These are often the same kids who hate sunscreen. Again, distraction can help. Take a hairbrush and “brush” the opposite arm or some other area of the body far away from the area that needs the cream. Alternatively, apply the cream during sleep. Another option- let your child apply his own cream- this gives back a feeling of control which can lead to better compliance with medicine. It also will help him to feel better faster. IF your child is complaining about stinging, try an ointment instead. Ointments tend to sting less than creams.

Of course, as last resort, you can always explain to your child in a logical, systematic fashion the mechanism of action of the medication and the future implications on your child’s health outcome.

If you choose this last method, you should probably have some Hershey’s syrup nearby. Just in case.

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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## **Flu update 2014-2015- We may be in for a rough winter**



Ben's runny nose, as depicted by Ben

*Because we couldn't have said it better ourselves, we have reprinted (with permission) our pediatrician colleague Dr. Roy Benaroch's recent flu update from his blog The Pediatric Insider.*

### **Some bad news about flu this year**

We could be in for a rough influenza winter.

First, data just released from the CDC shows that a lot of the flu circulating in the USA isn't a good match for the strains in this year's flu vaccines. About 82% of flu since autumn is a type A H3N2, one that historically has been associated with more-severe illness. Of those, only about half are closely related to the A/Texas/50/2012 strain that was chosen in February to be included in the vaccine. Unfortunately, current methods of vaccine production take a long time, and manufacturers have to commit early—months ahead of time—to what will be included in the vaccines. In February, when the World Health Organization made their recommendations for the Northern Hemisphere 2014-2015 flu vaccine, they chose the H3N2 that was then in circulation. Since then, it's "drifted", or changed, to a related but non-identical type.

What this means is that the current vaccine is well-matched to only about 40% of circulating flu. The vaccine will probably offer some protection against the other 60%— illness will be

milder and shorter—but a lot of people who got their flu vaccines are still going to get the flu, and spread the flu. Now, some protection is still better than none, so I'd still go and get that flu vaccine now if you haven't gotten it already. An imperfect (or, honestly, far-less-than-perfect) flu vaccine is better than none. But it isn't looking good this year.

And it gets worse. It's becoming increasingly clear that Tamiflu, the anti-viral medication we rely on to help treat influenza, doesn't work very well. As summarized by the Cochrane Collaboration earlier this year, studies show that Tamiflu is only modestly effective in reducing the length of influenza illness, and may be only slightly effective at reducing complications. If it does work for treatment of flu, it works best when started very early in the course of the illness. The FDA labeling calls for it to be started within 48 hours, but honestly it seems to barely work if started that late. Better to get it started within 24, or even better, 12 or 6 or 2 hours.

In practice, Tamiflu really doesn't seem to do much of anything for most of the flu patients seen in hospitals and doctor's offices, because we usually see patients too late. It does have a role in helping family members at risk for flu. They can start it immediately, at the first symptoms, and will probably get more benefit.

Tamiflu can also be used as a prophylactic, or preventive, agent in people exposed to flu with no symptoms, though again, the benefits are modest at best. Crunching the numbers, we probably have to treat about 33 people on average for just one person to benefit from prophylaxis. That's not very good, especially considering that all 33 people will have to pay for it and risk the side effects.

And Tamiflu does have some significant side effects. Nausea and vomiting are quite common, but the scarier reactions are depression, hallucinations, and psychosis. Neuropsychiatric



side effects are most common in people of Japanese ancestry.

So: the flu vaccine, this year, will probably offer only modest benefits. And Tamiflu really has very limited usefulness. It looks like we'd better prepare for a rough winter, and keep in mind some of the old-fashioned ways to keep from getting the flu:

- Stay away from sick people.
- If you're sick, stay home.
- Keep your mucus to yourself—sneeze into your elbow, or better yet into a tissue. And then wash your hands.
- Don't touch your own face. Flu virus on your hands doesn't make you sick until you help it get into your body by touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently, and especially before touching your face or eating.

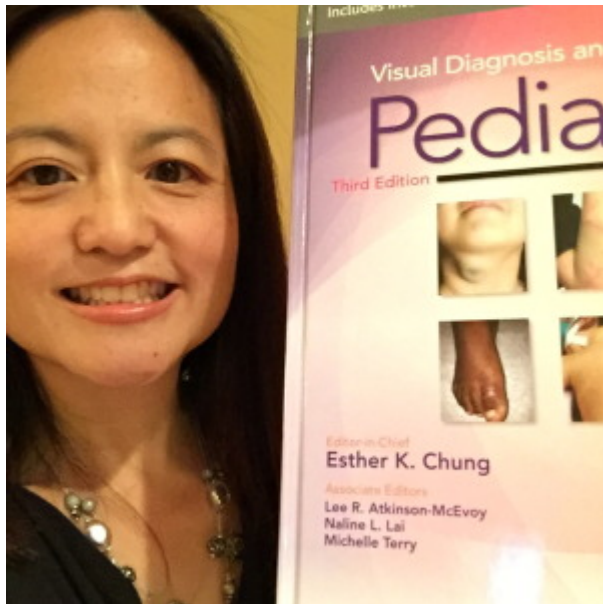
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In practice near Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Roy Benaroch is an assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at Emory University, a father of three, and the author of *The Guide to Getting the Best Health Care for your Child* and *Solving Health and Behavioral Problems from Birth through Preschool*. Most recently he is the Narrator of the Great Courses Series: *Medical School for Everyone*. We are fans of his blog *The Pediatric Insider*

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**For you medical photo geeks -  
3rd edition of Visual**

# Diagnosis and Treatment in Pediatrics



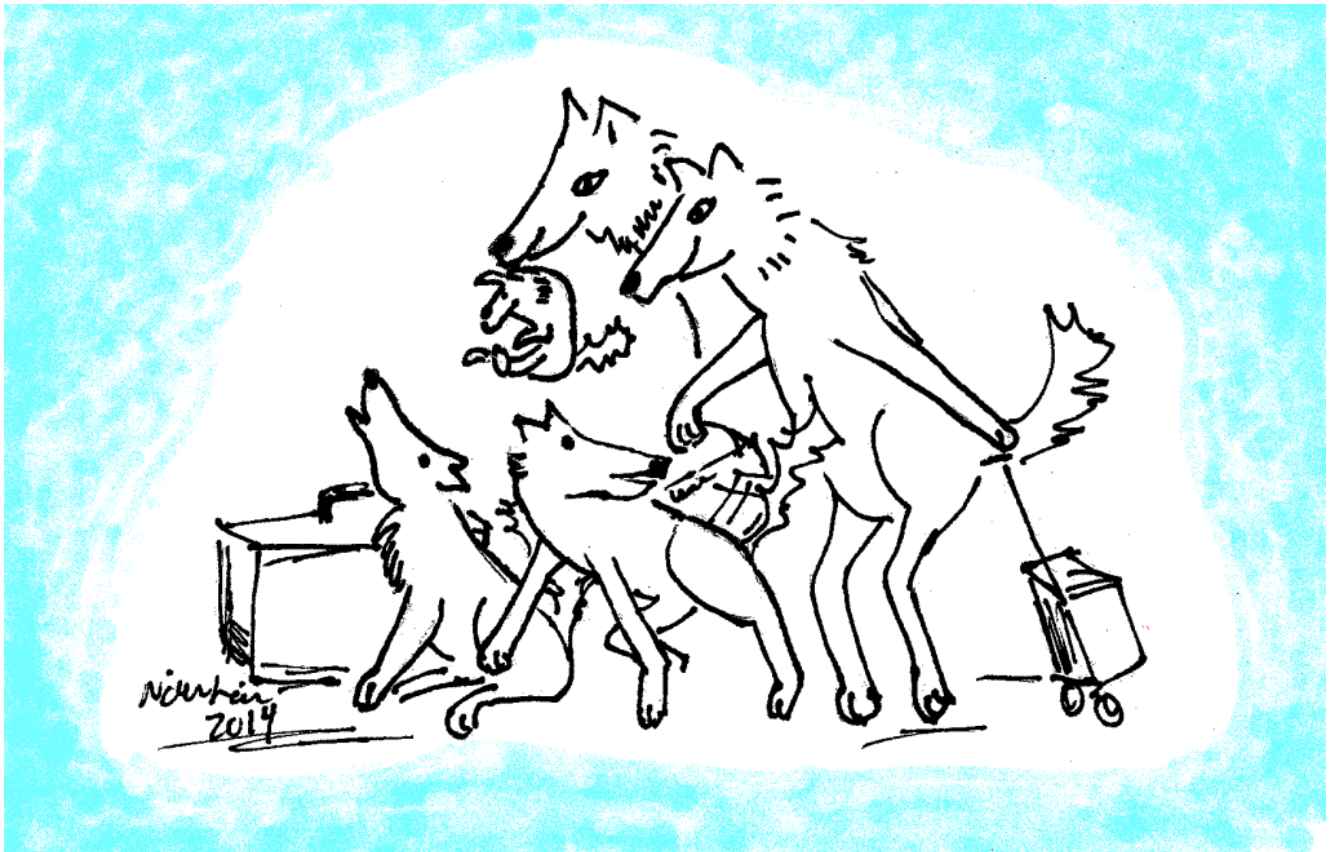
For all you medical photo geeks, Two Peds in a Pod is excited to announce that Dr. Lai is an associate editor of the newly published 3rd edition of Visual Diagnosis and Treatment in Pediatrics – for pediatric health care professionals or anyone who has enjoyed pinning our medical photos to Pinterest (we know you are out there).

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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## Tips for holiday travel with young children



In spite of long TSA lines, rental car challenges and all the howling, the wolf family went to grandmother's house every year for the holidays.

You don't appreciate how much your baby has grown until you attempt a diaper change on a plane. For families with young children, Thanksgiving or any holiday can become stressful when travel is involved. Often families travel great distances to be together and attend parties that run later than children's usual bedtime. Fancy food and fancy dress are common. Well-meaning relatives who see your children once a year can be too quick to hug and kiss, sending even not-so-shy kids running. Here are some tips for safer and smoother holiday travel:

**If you are flying:**

- **Do not offer Benadryl** (diphenhydramine) as a way of "insuring" sleep during a flight. Kids can have paradoxical reactions and become hyper instead of sleepy, and even if they do become sleepy, the added stimulation of flying can combine to produce an ornery,

sleepy, tantrum-prone kid. Usually the drone of the plane is enough to sooth kids into a slumber.

- **Not all kids develop ear pain** on planes as they descend—some sleep right through landing. However, if needed you can offer pacifiers, bottles, drinks, or healthy snacks during take-off and landing because swallowing may help prevent pressure buildup and thus discomfort in the ears. And yes, it is okay to fly with an ear infection.

### **General tips for visiting:**

- **Traveling 400 miles away from home to spend a few days with close family and/or friends is not the time to solve your child's chronic problems.** Let's say you have a child who is a poor sleeper and tries to climb into your bed every night at home. Knowing that even the best of sleepers often have difficulty sleeping in a new environment, just take your "bad sleeper" into your bed at bedtime and avoid your usual home routine of waking up every hour to walk her back into her room. Similarly, if you have a picky eater, pack her favorite portable meal as a backup for fancy dinners. But when you return home, please refer to our podcast and blog posts on helping your child to establish good sleep habits and on feeding picky eaters! One exception is when you are trying to say bye-bye to the binkie or pacifier.
- **Supervise your child's eating and do not allow your child to overeat while you catch up with a distant relative or friend.** Ginger-bread house vomit is DISGUSTING, as Dr. Kardos found out first-hand when one of her children ate too much of the beautiful and very generously-sized ginger bread house for dessert.
- **Speaking of food, a good idea is to give your children a wholesome, healthy meal at home, or at your "home base," before going to a holiday party** that will be filled with food that will be foreign to your children. Hunger fuels tantrums so make sure his appetite needs are met. Then,

you also won't feel guilty letting him eat sweets at a party because he already ate healthy foods earlier in the day.

- **If you have a young baby, be careful not to put yourself in a situation where you lose control of your ability to protect the baby from germs.** Well-meaning family members love passing infants from person to person, smothering them with kisses along the way. Unfortunately, nose-to-nose kisses may spread cold and flu viruses along with holiday cheer.
- **On the flip side, there are some family events, such as having your 95-year-old great-grandfather meet your baby for the first time, that are once-in-a-lifetime.** So while you should be cautious on behalf of your child, ultimately, heed your heart. At six weeks old, Dr. Lai's baby traveled several hours to see her grandfather in a hospital after he had a heart attack. She likes to think it made her father in law's recovery go more smoothly.
- **If you have a shy child, try to arrive early to the family gathering.** This avoids the situation of walking into house full of unfamiliar relatives or friends who can overwhelm him with their enthusiasm. Together, you and your shy child can explore the house, locate the toys, find the bathrooms, and become familiar with the party hosts. Then your child can become a greeter, or can simply play alone first before you introduce him to guests as they arrive. If possible, spend time in the days before the gathering sharing family photos and stories to familiarize your child with relatives or friends he may not see often.
- **Sometimes you have to remember that once you have children, their needs come before yours.** Although you eagerly anticipated a holiday reunion, your child may be too young to appreciate it for more than a couple of hours . An ill, overtired child makes everyone miserable. If your child has an illness, is tired, won't use the unfamiliar bathroom, has eaten too many cookies

and has a belly ache, or is in general crying, clingy, and miserable, despite your best efforts, just leave the party. You can console yourself that when your child is older his actions at that gathering will be the impetus for family legends, or at least will make for a funny story.

- **Enjoy your CHILD's perspective of Thanksgiving and other winter holidays:** enjoy his pride in learning new customs, his enthusiasm for opening gifts, his joy in playing with cousins he seldom sees, his excitement in reading holiday books, and his happiness as he spends extra time with you, his parents.

We wish you all the best this Thanksgiving!

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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Updated from our 2009 articles on these topics

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**More ideas and mouth watering  
recipes from our backyard  
organic gardening physician**





The many hues of cauliflower-photo by Dr. Mass

*Pediatrician and mom Dr. Marion Mass writes this post in honor of Random Acts of Kindness Day, today November 19 in Bucks County, PA. This day is in memory of Abby Schumer, a friend of Dr. Mass's family, who lost her life to a brain tumor at age 10. Gardening, cooking with her children, and donating meals to families in need is how Dr. Mass's family celebrates this day.*

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Despite the fact that it's November and several frosts have hit the Northeast, we still have a surplus of fresh vegetables from our organic garden. If you would like to be in this enviable position next year, please see my former guest-blog post explaining why you should get started now!

We garden because we value healthy high quality organic food. There is a no more satisfying way for your family to get it than from your own yard. Right now, garden centers across the Northern Hemisphere are selling off their seeds for cheap. And



these seeds can be saved until next year. How should you choose what to grow? Grow some produce you know your family is will eat. First, consider looking for seeds with different hues. For example, many kids will eat lettuce. How about a red or maroon-leaved variety? Ditto that with the gardener's favorite, tomatoes. There are yellow, orange, pink, black and blue varieties. One of my pet hypotheses is that the more colors we ingest, the healthier we are...and kids love a rainbow plate. Grow some vegetables that are easy to grow: radishes, beans, beets, and the butternut squash and New Zealand spinach described below, all fall into this category.

Spinach is high in vitamins A, B2, B6, E and K, as well as numerous antioxidants and iron. Shockingly, one cup of spinach contains 25% of the US RDA of calcium, welcome information for those who do not consume dairy products. We grow New Zealand spinach because it does not get stringy and bitter like other varieties and doesn't get mushy when cooked. In addition, two seeds of this variety grow a plant that is so prolific that it feeds my family and several others from late July (seed planted in May) until the hard frost takes it out.

Butternut squash is high in fiber and extraordinarily high in vitamin A. It is great to grow up a gate or fence, the flowers are edible, and if your kids don't mind crushing stink bugs, easy to grow. This year only 6 seeds grew 65 pounds of our favorite hard squash!

Cauliflower is also high in fiber as well as vitamin C. Recent studies suggest that there are certain phytochemicals in cauliflower with cancer-fighting properties. It's a little harder to grow, given its attractiveness to the cabbage looper caterpillar, one of my garden nemeses. Vigilance and a few tricks can help you! We purchase praying mantis egg cases and lacewing insect eggs from online stores such as Gardens Alive. These beneficial insects will eat the cabbage looper caterpillar. In addition, finding the green worms on the back of the leaves and hand crushing them depletes their

population.



New Zealand Spinach

***Mouth watering recipes:***

**Farfalle, Sausage and NEW ZEALAND Spinach**

*This recipe is good with any leafy greens, and would be OK with traditional spinach, but it is exceptional with New Zealand spinach which has a great bite and holds up after cooking. This recipe is the creation of my wonderful foodie-friend Jeannine*

Ingredients – (flexible on all quantities)

1 lb Italian sweet sausage, casing removed

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/3 cup red wine

salt/pepper to taste

New Zealand Spinach, washed/dried -enough leaves to cover (2) dish towels

Farfalle pasta,  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb

Parmesan, freshly grated, to taste

Preparation – takes 15 minutes

1. Cook pasta in pot boiling salt water. Farfalle usually takes 10 minutes.

2. At the same time, in a deep skillet, cook sausage, crumbling with cooking utensil as it cooks; you can add a

little water while it cooks, to prevent sticking, but don't add too much; the meat sticking will help you when you deglaze pan later

3. Once sausage is cooked, add the minced garlic (1) minute

4. Add wine, simmering a few minutes, deglaze the pan with your spatula, all the stuck pieces of browned meats will come off bottom skillet.

5. Then add the dry spinach leaves; even if pan is overflowing with spinach, it will wilt to a much smaller amount. If using "new Zealand" spinach, it needs extra liquid to cook – scoop out a measuring cup of the boiling pasta water and add to the sausage/spinach mixture to help cook. Cover with lid for approx 2 minutes. You want the spinach to be wilted, but not overcooked.

6. Season with salt and pepper to taste

7. Drain cooked pasta and mix in serving bowl with sausage mixture.

8. Pass grated parmesan cheese

9. Great leftover too.



Butternut squash -  
photo by Dr. Mass

**Roasted Butternut Squash with Pepitas and Pomegranates**

Preheat oven to 375. Cube a medium butternut squash into  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch pieces. I leave the skin on for extra fiber. Place on a rimmed cookie sheet and drizzle with 1-2 tbsp olive oil, sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt. Roast in oven till fork tender, about 45 minutes. Remove from oven, sprinkle with roasted pepitas (pumpkin seeds) and sprinkle with pomegranate seeds. Serve warm or at room temp. Makes a great Thanksgiving vegetarian entrée, just add cubed fresh Mexican cheese (queso fresco)

### **Roasted Cauliflower**

Preheat oven to 350. Cut 1 medium head of cauliflower into 1 inch florets and place on rimmed cookie sheet. Drizzle with 2 tbsp melted butter (it really tastes better than olive oil here) and sprinkle with 2 tsp organic cane sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp cumin, and a tiny pinch of cinnamon. Roast in oven for 30 minutes until fork tender. We serve this as an appetizer or a side dish. You can vary the spices used... We added chili powder last night, have done it with oregano and thyme or coriander.

### **Some of my favorite garden websites:**

Kitchen Gardeners International (features forums, recipes, blogs and the ability for people to gather on a local level)

Chiot's Run (garden journal of a small organic garden in the Midwest)

The Royal Horticultural Society (the UK's leading gardening charity, promotes horticulture and gardening.)

You Grow Girl (unusual plants, recipes, beautiful pictures, and gardening tips)

Skippy's Vegetable Garden (a Boston city vegetable garden)

Marion Mass, MD

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# Gift ideas by ages and stages



*Nice Auntie Mimi bought me Candy Land for the holidays... too bad I won't know my colors or understand how to take turns until next year.*

It's gift-giving season! Now that your families are another year older, it's time to update our sometimes-you-just-want-to-buy-something holiday gift idea list arranged by ages and developmental stages.

**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 themselves through sucking- if you can figure out what your nephew's favorite type of binkie is, wrap up a bunch-they are expensive and often mysteriously disappear.

**3-6 months:** Babies start to reach and grab at objects. They enjoy things big enough to hold onto and safe enough to put in their mouths- try bright colored teething rings and large plastic "keys." New cloth and vinyl books will likewise be appreciated; gnawed books don't make great hand-me-downs.

**6-12 months:** Around six months, babies begin to sit alone or sit propped. Intellectually, they begin to understand "cause and effect." Good choices of gifts include toys with large buttons that make things happen with light pressure. Toys

which make sounds, play music, or cause Elmo to pop up will be a hit. For a nine-month-old 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 your 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. Include gifts which promote joint attention. Joint attention is the kind of attention a child shares with you during moments of mutual discovery. Joint attention starts at two months of age when you smile at your baby and your baby smiles back. Later, around 18 months, if you point at a dog in a book, she will look at the dog then look back at you and smile. Your child not only shows interest in the same object, but she acknowledges that you are both interested. Joint attention is thought to be important for social and emotional growth.

At 12 months your baby no longer needs to suck from a bottle or the breast for hydration. Although we don't believe mastery of a sippy cups is a necessary developmental milestone , Dr. Lai does admire the WOW cup because your child can drink from it like she does from a regular cup. Alternatively, you can give fun, colored actual traditional plastic cups, which difficult to break and encourage drinking from a real cup!

**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. They also love containers to collect things, dump out, then collect again.

Yes, older toddlers are also dexterous enough to swipe an ipad, but be aware, electronics can be a double edged sword– the same device which plays karaoke music for your daddy-toddler sing-along can be

transformed into a substitute parent. The other day, a toddler was frightened of my stethoscope in the office. Instead of smiling and demonstrating to her toddler how a stethoscope does not hurt, the mother repeatedly tried to give her toddler her phone and told the child to watch a video. Fast forward a few years, and the mother will wonder why her kid fixates on her phone and does not look up at the family at the dinner table. Don't train an addiction.

**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. 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 nephew when he was one are probably squirting out black specks of mold instead of water- get him a new set. Looking ahead, in the spring a three- 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 a shin guards and soccer ball with a shirt. Offer to pay for swim lessons and package a gift certificate with a pair of goggles.

**3-4 years:** Now kids engage in elaborate imaginary play. They enjoy "dress up" clothes to create characters- super heroes, dancers, wizards, princesses, kings, queens, animals. Kids also enjoy props for their pretend play, such as plastic kitchen gadgets, magic wands, and building blocks. They become adept at pedaling tricycles or even riding small training-wheeled bikes. Other gift ideas include crayons, paint, markers, Play-doh®, or side-walk chalk. 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.



**5-year-olds:** Since 5-year-olds can hop on one foot, games like Twister® will be fun. Kids this age start to understand time. In our world of digital clocks, get your nephew an analog clock with numbers and a minute hand... they are hard to come by. Five-year-olds also begin to understand charts— a calendar will also cause delight. They can also work jigsaw puzzles with somewhat large pieces.

**8-year-olds:** Kids at this point should be able to perform self help skills such as teeth brushing. Help them out with stocking stuffers such as toothbrushes with timers. They also start to understand the value of money (here is one way to teach kids about money). The kids will appreciate gifts such as a wallet or piggy bank. Eight-year-olds engage in rough and tumble play and can play outdoor games with rules. Think balls, balls, balls- soccer balls, kickballs, baseballs, tennis balls, footballs. Basic sports equipment of any sort will be a hit. Label makers will also appeal to this age group since they start to have a greater sense of ownership.

**10-year-olds:** Fine motor skills are quite developed and intricate arts and crafts such as weaving kits can be manipulated. Give a “cake making set” (no, not the plastic oven with a light bulb) with tubes of frosting and cake mix to bake over the winter break. Buy two plastic recorders, one for you and one for your child, to play duets. The instrument is simple enough for ten-year-olds or forty-year-olds to learn on their own. Ten-year-olds value organization in their world and want to be more independent. Therefore, a watch makes a good gift at this age. And don’t forget about books: reading skills are more advanced at this age. They can read chapter books or books about subjects of interest to them. In particular, kids at this age love a good joke or riddle book.

**Tweens:** Your child now has a longer attention span (30-40 minutes) so building projects such as K’nex® models will be of interest to her. She can now also understand directions for performing magic tricks or making animal balloons. This is a time when group identity becomes more important. Sleepovers and scouting trips are common at this age so sleeping bags and camping tents make great gifts. Tweens value their privacy – consider a present of a journal with a lock or a

doorbell for her room.

**Teens:** 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.

<http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets>

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 shopping with her aunt, tickets to a show with her uncle, or two hours at the rock climbing gym with dad.

Encourage physical activity. Sports equipment is always pricey for a teen to purchase- give the fancy sports bag he's been eying or give a gym membership. A running watch is always appreciated or treat them to moisture wicking work-out clothes or a gift card to a sports equipment store.

Sleep! Who doesn't need it, and teens often short change themselves on sleep and fall into poor sleep habits. Help a teen enjoy a comfortable night of rest and buy luxurious high thread count pillow cases, foam memory pillows, or even a new mattress. After all, it been nearly 20 years since you bought your teen a mattress and he probably wasn't old enough at the time to tell you if he was comfortable. Since a teen often goes to bed later than you do, a remote light control will be appreciated by all.

Enjoy your holiday shopping!

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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*Modified from our original November 2012 post*

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# Using melatonin in children

*Our guest blogger, Dr. Kristann Heinz, a doctor who practices with a holistic and integrative approach, shares her knowledge about melatonin use in children. – Drs. Kardos and Lai*



When we got back from Hawaii my three year old daughter, Ruby, was a hot mess! The eight-hour time difference made it hard for her to adjust her internal clock. At first, I just attributed it to routine jet lag but after a week of the same sleep-wake cycle, I knew something was going on. She was wandering around the house in her pink spotted pajamas WIDE AWAKE until 1am, 2am, and 3am. And then in the morning, she was dead asleep and I could barely get her up. So at this point, I took her to our doctor to make sure everything was all right. The doctor told us my daughter's jet lag was leading to a sleep disturbance and suggested I try melatonin. I gave melatonin to Ruby that night. She was asleep by 11pm and slept soundly until morning. Over the next few days, she adjusted beautifully and we were back to a normal sleep routine in 3 days. After that, we stopped the melatonin.

## **What is Melatonin?**

Melatonin is a hormone that occurs naturally in our bodies. A hormone is a signal containing a message from one part of the body to another. Melatonin is naturally secreted by the pineal gland, a gland located in the brain that is very sensitive to

light. As night falls, the pineal gland secretes melatonin to tell the brain that it is time to sleep. This process is sometimes described as the “opening of the sleep gate.”

### **Why would my doctor prescribe melatonin to my child?**

People often use melatonin to help adjust their sleep-wake cycles. For adults melatonin is used to treat a variety of medical disorders including cancer, headaches, and autoimmune disorders as well as insomnia. In children however, the primary reason melatonin is prescribed is for sleep disturbance. Some children with certain medical conditions are thought to have lower levels of naturally produced melatonin, which contributes to sleep-wake disturbances. For these children supplementing with melatonin can be beneficial and enhance sleep. Melatonin has been studied and shown to be helpful to children with developmental delays, ADHD, cerebral palsy, autism, and jet lag.

### **What dose should I use?**

The dose of melatonin should be discussed with your doctor. Doses can range from 0.03mg – 6mg, generally given at bedtime. To establish the appropriate therapeutic dose, your doctor will take into account your child’s weight and the health condition you are trying to treat.

### **Are there different kinds of melatonin?**

Melatonin is synthetically produced but there are also products that contain biological glandular material, a source of natural melatonin. Synthetically produced melatonin is recommended by most doctors because it provides a more consistent dose and is less likely to be contaminated.

**Melatonin comes in three different forms:** immediate release, sustained released and sublingual. The most convenient form of melatonin for children is the sublingual form because their bodies begin to absorb it as soon as it is placed in the mouth. The sublingual form is easier than swallowing a pill, which can be difficult or uncomfortable for some children.

There are many different liquid brands available as well, which have the same benefit. Another good way to administer melatonin to a child is to dissolve an immediate release melatonin tablet in juice or mix it with applesauce before offering it to your child. Taking melatonin with food does not change the effectiveness of the supplement.

### **How long does it take to work?**

Melatonin should work the first night it is given to a child and it does not require multiple doses to be effective. It can take up to 30 minutes after taking the medication to experience its full effect. Often your child will begin to feel drowsy and tired soon after taking the supplement.

Let's use jet lag as an example of how to use melatonin. You may give the melatonin to your child just before bedtime in the new time zone. The supplement will facilitate sleep within 30 minutes of taking it. But, remember, our internal clocks usually adjust one hour a day when we travel to different time zones, and melatonin can only help to a point. The greater the time difference the more difficult it is for our bodies to resume a normal sleep pattern in the new time zone. If, for instance, there is a twelve-hour time difference, it will still take time for our biologic rhythms to change, even with the help of melatonin. However, the transition is often faster and smoother with the aid of melatonin. Melatonin is not a sleeping pill. It is used to enhance the onset of sleep naturally.

### **Are There Side Effects or Contraindications?**

Melatonin is very safe. The most common side effect for children is excessive sleepiness, which can be moderated by decreasing the dose. In high doses, which are used mostly in treating adults (10mg-60mg melatonin), side effects include headaches, nausea, dizziness and fatigue. For children, taking melatonin is not associated with any short or long-term side effects in relation to growth, development or puberty. Drug interactions can take place between melatonin and sedatives,

antidepressants and hormones, so if your child is taking medications of this kind, be sure to discuss whether it is safe to give your child Melatonin with your child's doctor before doing so.

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**Cold weather is here: time to start an organic produce garden with your kids**



*We welcome pediatrician Dr. Marion Mass to talk about starting a garden from a piece of suburban lawn. – Drs. Kardos and Lai*

A few years back, my family was getting ready for my parents to come for dinner and I was peeling the skins off the roasted beets we had grown for my mother. One of her favorites...but not mine. My five-year-old Brian had picked the beets and was eager to try them. As Brian brought a sliver of beet up to his mouth I braced myself for a “yucky face”. Instead, I was shocked to see him gobble the beets up. He loved them. To this day, beets are one of his favorite veggies.

Hands down, the best activity I have ever done with my family is planting and nurturing an organic garden for 11 years. Along the path to growing delectable vegetables, we have discovered together gardening’s health, intellectual and social benefits.

Actively tied to the process of supplying their own food, gardening kids will naturally want to eat more and more



produce. Kids develop a sense of pride (truly, a basketful of beans, lettuce and cucumbers is so attractive) and eventually they develop a positive association with the outdoors and vegetables. In addition to eating more quantity, what your kids eat will be healthier than store bought veggies. Produce closer to harvest contains more nutrients and you don't get closer than your own yard to table. If you garden organically, you will also avoid potentially harmful chemicals. Lastly, there is a sense of relaxation upon stepping into a garden. It is a balm for anxiety, for depression, for anger; in short, one of the best adjuvants to mental health therapy that I know.

If you want to harvest a crop next year, and you live in a cold weather area of the northern hemisphere, NOW is the best time to start. The most cumbersome task of starting a garden is to dig up the sod (existing lawn), but a few tricks in the fall can prevent this disc-slipping chore.

- Chose a spot in your yard that gets at least 6 and preferably 8 hours of sunlight a day.
- If possible, stay away from edges, tree lines and spots where large garden parasites (such as deer, rabbit and groundhogs) lurk.
- If you live next to a pesticide happy neighbor, you will want to locate your garden away from a spray zone and will want to think about runoff. A helpful site to determine runoff capabilities of specific pesticides is: <http://www.pw.ucr.edu/>
- Remember you may need to water your organic garden bed once in awhile, so keep it close to a water source (or at least someplace to which you don't mind lugging a hose).
- Start small: a 3 x 10 foot plot can grow a good bit if you plan well. Lay out a 12 layer thick plot of newspaper over the grass where you want your garden to grow and dump 4 inches of composted manure, manure and

hummus mix or mushroom soil over top of the newspaper.

You can purchase in bulk from a garden center (I would do 2 cubic yards for a 3 x 10 spot) or in bags (about 15 40 lb bags).

That's it. Now go away and leave the garden alone until spring. During the fall and winter, the grass will die and the newspaper will rot. Both will become a source of composted nutrients for your garden veggies. While you hibernate this winter, start your wheels turning and think about what crops you will grow. Buy a few packs of discounted seeds now; they will still germinate next year.

When the ground is ready in the spring, rent a tiller or get a sturdy pitchfork (trust me, the tiller is SO much easier!!) and turn over the soil mixing the composted manure, rotted newspaper and dead sod into the rocky soil we have around here. The result will be a much richer garden soil that your vegetables will love.

What are you waiting for?? Get cracking now and start your produce garden. Hopefully, by next spring your kids will be eating and enjoying organic beets that they grew !!!!

Marion Mass MD, FAAP

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*In practice for 17 years, Marion Mass MD, FAAP graduated from Penn State and Duke University Medical School. She*

completed her pediatric residency at Northwestern University's Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Currently Dr. Mass works at Jellinek Pediatrics in Doylestown, PA and serves on the Wellness Council of the Central Bucks School District, PA. Produce from her kids' garden garnishes the plates of many local families as well as the plates of the restaurant Puck. All garden profits benefit Relay for Life. ☐ When she is not in her home garden, you can find her also tending to her son's middle school garden.