

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple A Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness program, where we give you news and information that you can use to live a healthier lifestyle. This is Katie Johnson and joining me as my guest this morning is Dr. Angela Folstad. She is a pediatrician here at Lake Region Healthcare, and is here to talk back to school health. Good morning Dr. Folstad.

Dr. Folstad: Hi Katie, it's nice to be with you again.

Katie Johnson: It's always great to have you on the show. When we think about back to school time, of course we've just started August but I think August triggers that thought in people's minds, that back to school time will be here before we know it. There are a lot of things to think about, really from head to toe, so I thought we could play a little game of head and shoulders, knees and toes, and try and cover everything that head to toe kids and parents should be thinking about as they prepare for back to school time. Starting on the head are eyes, at what age should eye exams start for kids? How often are they needed?

Dr. Folstad: That's a great question. We begin looking at eyes and evaluating eyes in the newborn period. That starts with making sure the retina is fine. Then later on as the child becomes 2, 4 months old, we start looking at how they track and things. The formal eye test begin here in the office around 3 years of age, with those standard [inaudible 00:01:20] where people have to identify shapes and stuff like that. Then it's about every 2 years after that. This is just a screening here, if there's ever any concerns of course we refer them on to a optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Katie Johnson: Right, so when would it make the most sense for a child to move from just the reg- If they're not being referred by you for any problems, to start going to the eye clinic to an actual optometrist or ophthalmologist?

Dr. Folstad: Probably around 3 years of age quite honestly.

Katie Johnson: Okay.

Dr. Folstad: Again 3 years is when we begin screening here. It really is child dependent and day dependent. A lot of times if they're not cooperative here, we kind of struggle and there's some concerns, it's always a great idea to follow up with a specialist.

Katie Johnson: With the eye clinic right downstairs, that's nice and easy to do.

Dr. Folstad: Absolutely. They're phenomenal with children.

Katie Johnson: Head and shoulders, going to the shoulders, that brings to my mind backpacks. Of course they come in all kinds of shapes and sizes, and choosing the right one for a kid probably has more to do with what color and what brand it is, but we need to think about more than that, right? What are the backpack dangers? What should we be looking for?

Dr. Folstad: I love backpacks. In fact my husband gives me a hard time because I carry a backpack rather than a purse or messenger bag, just because they're so darn handy. They keep me organized, that's a huge thing. If your child is required to bring pencils, pens, color pencils, eraser, everything has its own compartment so it's so easy to go through a checklist every morning to make sure they have all of their items with them. As far as the actual backpack is concerned, we definitely recommend a lightweight one because they will be putting so much cargo inside of it. Maybe some wider straps rather than narrow straps, with pads, a padded back as well so that that does protect the back, not only from some of the stiff corner but if they have any sharp objects in there as well. A waist band too, or a belt type buckle, is also recommended.

As far as the backpack is concerned, it should never be more than 10% to 15% of the child's weight, so kind of be a little judicious as far as what the child needs. Is it essential or is it just something they want to take to school that day? Sometimes putting the heavier items towards the back and the lighter items towards what would be the opening is a good idea. That will help reduce the stress. The worst thing you can do is put a lot of weight towards the back because that's going to cause an arch in the back and a lot of muscle strain. Also of course using the backpack correctly, using both straps rather than looking cool or being fast and just lopping it over one shoulder, is recommended.

Katie Johnson: A very good point. Going to the knees, these bring to mind for me growing pains. The way that they sometimes keep kids awake at night. I thought we could cover 2 topics here, both relief tips for growing pains and the importance of good sleep and what to do when things like that interrupt good sleep.

Dr. Folstad: Growing pains, that's a great topic. We usually see it around 2 time periods in kids lives. Usually around 3 to 5 years of age and then again 10 to 12 years of age. The pain is usually along the muscle belly itself, so in the quadriceps or thigh region, and then the calves, usually not in the joints. If your child complains of joint pain, it's either red or swollen, that is not growing pains and needs to be evaluated. If a child likes to be touched where the pain is, that usually is growing pain because if there is actually pathology there they do not want to be touched or moved. Relieving factors would be Ibuprofen or Tylenol, massage and heat.

Katie Johnson: To the sleep side of that question then, if it is interrupting sleep or other things are interrupting your child's sleep, that's really a crucial thing to pay attention to, particularly during the school year.

Dr. Folstad: Absolutely. Good solid sleep is essential to be successful academically and athletically. If sleep is disturbed by growing pains, something like massaging, a little heat to the area, would be a good idea. Sometimes stretching as well for those darn Charley horses that may wake you up is a good idea. But gosh, yeah, sleep. Sleep is so essential and so, kind of take it for granted. It is the last item of your day that is preserved. Once you get through the academic day, once you get through

your athletic day, the family meal time, the homework, whatever you have left is then for sleep. If you can preserve and protect 9 hours at least a night for sleep, the rest of your day will be so much more satisfying.

Katie Johnson: It's truly a foundation, not only for school age kids from what I've heard but throughout your life. Moving on to the toes, the health of our feet is often a reflection of the health of our whole body, so how important is it to start our kids with good foot care early in life? When we're back to school shopping in particular maybe some tips about picking out good shoes.

Dr. Folstad: Yes, this is something I surely took for granted when I was a child. Shoes unlike other items of clothing and protective wear, should not really be hand me downs. Sweaters, caps, socks, mittens, those are all one size fits all, but shoes are so specific and can get worn out easier than other things. Shoes are actually shock protectors and absorbers for the body, so even though the upper shoe may look like it's intact and somewhat new, if the sole is worn it really isn't of great benefit for the child. Watch out too for those flip flops, although they're great for beaches and summertime and pools and things like that, you shouldn't really walk in them long term, they don't have the greatest arch support and they don't have the best shock absorbing capacity.

Katie Johnson: Those are things to look for when picking out shoes, the arch support and the overall shock absorption that it can give a kid, putting on lots of steps through the hallways and through the active lifestyles that kids have these days.

Dr. Folstad: Absolutely. You should never have to break in a pair of shoes, they should always have some flexibility, especially where the ball of your foot. The mid-sole should be a little bit stiffer, but if a child is limping or there's rubbing in the shoe, that's going to be extraordinarily uncomfortable, lead to blisters, probably a change in the way you plant your foot, which will then result in ankle issues, knee and hip pain.

Katie Johnson: Finally a true head to toe topic, we know lots of kids participate in sports and we should mention the sports physical, or the pre-participation exam. What's involved in a high quality sports physical?

Dr. Folstad: Sports physicals are very important and essential, and a lot of schools will require them before engaging in a new sport, or before a new competitive season begins. The most important part of a sports physical is actually the medical history. There is most of the times a form that the student or child should sit down with a parent prior to because it's not only going to be about the child's history but also the family history. It's essential to know about cardiac health, if there is any uncommon causes of death in the family, diabetes, asthma, as well a child's health such as previous concussions, fractures, because that will definitely, not necessarily restrict the child from participating in a sport, but maybe change how they can reduce the likelihood or re-injury.

Katie Johnson: A sports physical should not be confused with a well-child visit, though they can be

combined, right?

Dr. Folstad: Absolutely, they can be combined, but the focus is a little bit different. If you want to combine them that's fine, just let know it's going to require a bit more time and be a bit more comprehensive. But the sports is definitely more geared to athletic physical ability rather than lifestyle, as far as sleep, tooth care and things like that, that we do in a comprehensive physical.

Katie Johnson: This is all great advice Dr. Folstad. Anything else you want to add as you're thinking about the kids out there getting ready for back to school this fall?

Dr. Folstad: I know that Minnesota summers are absolutely priceless, and August is such a bittersweet month because it's still enjoyable but you know that school's coming, so if you can embrace it enthusiastically, get yourself in the best physical, mental, emotional state, the school year will be so much more enjoyable and satisfying.

Katie Johnson: Such great advice. Dr. Angela Folstad, pediatrician at Lake Region Healthcare, helping us out with back to school tips for a healthy school year. We appreciate your time today Dr. Folstad so very much.

Dr. Folstad: Thank you for letting me participate.

Katie Johnson: Dr. Angela Folstad and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day today, reminding you there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.