

FACES NEWSLETTER

Family and Consumer Science



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Electronic Media Violence & Kids

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The Facts

Today, children are more engaged in “media activities” than ever before. Television, videos, music, movies and video/computer games are replacing the age-old traditions of recreation. Children are intrigued by these fast-paced, attractive and alluring forms of entertainment. Media is extremely powerful in the way it attracts, helps educate and effectively communicates.

The Nielsen Media Research reports that on average a child watches three hours of television every day. By the time children reach kindergarten, they have watched over 4,000 hours of television. When they finish elementary school, they have viewed nearly 8,000 murders and 100,000 various acts of violence. At first glance, these numbers may seem outrageous. However, when over two-thirds of TV programming has violence portrayed in it, these statistics become more realistic and very believable.

Helpful Hints

Because violence has embedded itself into our society as something normal. . . a part of everyday life, media violence may seem innocent, even unnoticeable to an adult. To a child however, media violence confirms that aggressive behavior is condoned and acceptable. Many studies have repeatedly demonstrated that children who have witnessed violence in the media become increasingly aggressive in their behavior towards others.

Since child behavior and early perceptions are highly influenced by television and other forms of media, parents should be concerned with how their children view the real world versus the world portrayed in television, video games and music. The American Academy of Pediatrics has provided a few helpful hints for making that distinction:

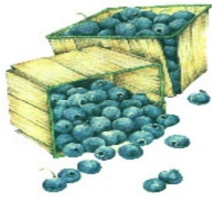
- Set a standard of only one to two hours of television per day. Be certain that those hours provide quality television. This rule also can be implemented for all forms of electronic media.
- Don't let your child have television in his/her bedroom.
- Don't allow children under the age of two to watch television programs.
- Supervise and make sure that your child is watching informational, educational and non-violent television program. In addition, monitor what types of video games, music and movies they play.
- Watch TV, play video games and attend movies with your kids, and talk about the realities behind them verses what is portrayed.
- For your older children, use program associated with controversial topics as a tool for discussing issues related to sex, violence, drugs, etc. Listen to your child's own reactions, feelings and ideas about what is observed.
- When you know the content, record educational programs for future viewing.
- Create and offer other types of entertainment.

Alternatives for Kids

- Learn and practice playing a musical instrument.
- Explore zoos, libraries, museums, parks, historical sites, etc...
- Go for a walk, hike, jog or run.
- Join a sports team through school or community programs.
- Play a board game or cards.
- Illustrate a drawing, painting or sculpture.
- Keep a diary.
- Read a book, magazine or newspaper.
- Write a letter.

Rather than the media, parents, friends and school need to become a greater positive influence in the lives of children. Don't let commercial programs determine the level of violence your child believes is normal and appropriate. With this in mind, educate your child about the "rights and wrongs" portrayed in the media. One of the most important lesson you can teach your child is that violence is not entertainment.





Get a Taste of the Blues

Blueberry season is in full swing and there's nothing better than blueberries you pick yourself or buy from your local blueberry farm. These berries will be the freshest you can get, with little or no handling and travel. Nothing beats the flavor and fragrance of fresh-picked blueberries! Also watch for locally-grown blueberries at your local farmers market during the harvest season.

Blueberries are one of the easiest fruit to prepare and serve. There's no peeling, pitting, coring or cutting. Select plump, full blueberries with a light gray-blue color. A berry with any hint of red isn't fully ripened, and once picked, blueberries won't ripen and further. Since blueberries hang on the bushes in bunches a bit like grapes do, the easiest and fastest way to pick them is hold your bucket under them in one hand and with your other hand, cup a ripe bunch and gently rub them with your fingers. The ripe berries will drop into your bucket, while the unripe ones will remain attached to the bush.

Once picked, don't place the berries, still warm from the sun, in a closed bag or container. Leave them in an open container so moisture doesn't form in the container.

Don't wash berries until just before using to prevent berries from becoming mushy. When preparing fresh or frozen berries place the berries in a strainer and rinse with cool water.

Chill berries soon after picking to increase shelf life. If refrigerated, fresh-picked blueberries will keep 10 to 14 days.

You can feel good about choosing to eat blueberries, as they are very nutritious. They are rich in Vitamins A, C, E and beta-carotene as well as rich in potassium, manganese, magnesium. They are very high in fiber and low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium. Research also tells us that of all fresh fruits and vegetables, blueberries provide the most health-protecting antioxidants. Antioxidants help to stop the production of free radicals. Free radicals are groups of atoms that impair the cells of the immune system. Antioxidants prevent cancer-causing cell damage and may limit the changes wrought by age related diseases.

BLUEBERRY MEASUREMENTS

(All measurements are approximate)

1 pint basket of berries yields 2 cups

1 quart of berries weighs 1½ lbs.

1 flat (8 quarts) weighs 10 lbs.

To preserve your harvest for the off-season you can choose to either freeze or can them.

Freezing

Freeze berries in freezer containers without washing to keep the skins from toughening. Place berries on a shallow pan one layer deep. Freeze, then pour the frozen berries into freezer containers.

Unwashed blueberries freeze individually and can be easily poured from containers in desired amounts.

Note: Frozen blueberries retain all the nutritional benefits of fresh blueberries.

Canning

For a canner load of 7 quarts, you will need approximately 12 pounds of berries; for a canner load of 9 pints about 8 pounds is needed.

Choose ripe, sweet berries with uniform color. Wash 1 or 2 quarts of berries at a time. Drain. *Prepare and boil syrup if

desired. Add ½ cup syrup, juice or water to each clean jar. Heat berries in boiling water for 30 seconds and drain. Pack hot berries into hot jars and cover with more hot syrup, juice, or water leaving ½ -inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner 15 minutes for pints, 20 minutes for quarts.

**To make your syrup- mix 3 cups sugar with 6 cup of water and heat until sugar dissolves to yield enough syrup for 9 pints. Double this recipe for 7 quarts.*

Blueberries aren't just for dessert either, try this great award winning recipe from The NC Blueberry Festival Cookbook.

Blueberry Chicken Salad

2 cups fresh blueberries
2 cups cubed cooked chicken breast
¾ cup chopped celery
½ cup diced sweet red pepper
½ cup thinly sliced green onions
6 ounce lemon yogurt
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
½ teaspoon salt
Bibb lettuce leaves
Set a few blueberries aside for garnish. In a large bowl, combine the chicken, celery, red pepper, onions and remaining blueberries. Combine the yogurt, mayonnaise and salt; drizzle over chicken mixture and gently toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Serve on lettuce-lined plates if desired. Top with reserved blueberries.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for June 16th to attend the NC Blueberry Festival in our neighboring Pender County. For more information visit www.ncblueberryfestival.com.

Tips for Breaking Bad Habits

Continue your quest to cut the clutter out of your lives by ridding yourself of a few common habits that cause clutter or frustration. The key is to start small, don't try to do everything at once, as that can be overwhelming. If you identify with a few, follow these tips to help curb them easily one habit at a time.

Habit: Desktop Disorganization

- Sort mail immediately, tossing junk and organizing the rest in a drawer or beautiful birdcage.
- Conquer paper clutter right away. File bank statements, receipts and more in an organized folder system.
- Repurpose on-hand items like jars or cereal boxes as desk organizers.

Habit: Magazine Hoarding

- Lay them all out on the floor and choose two or three of each title to keep. Recycle, repurpose or donate the rest.
- Store them on a ladder, suitcase or tray. If you haven't read them in six months, recycle.
- Scan for clippings of your favorite recipes and projects, then create an organized recipe system or inspiring style board.

Tip: Get rid of bulky magazines and decorate at the same time! Frame and display your favorite covers, make recycled magazine picture frames, or use them to decoupage.

Habit: Bargain Shopping

- Begin using a rule. One new item comes in the home, another one goes out.
- Put rarely used items in a box. If you don't open it for six months, donate it.
- Organize a garage sale once a year.
- Clean out closets once a season, and donate unwanted items.

Tip: See something to purchase, but not sure if you need it? Think about it for 24 hours first. You'll be surprised how often you forget about or realize you don't need the item.

Habit: Laundry Pile-Up

- If you tend to throw dirty clothes on the floor, keep hampers where they pile up.
- Wear clothes like jeans, sweaters, blouses and pajamas more than once.
- Keep a clean, organized laundry room. If it's an inviting space, you're more likely to enjoy being in it.

Tip: Instead of using a towel for dish drying, air dry in a rack to lessen your laundry load.

Habit: Dirty Dish Ditching

- Keep dishwashing supplies near the sink for easy access, and hand-wash dishes as you use them, or put them directly in the dishwasher.
- If you can't clean dishes right away, work in small batches to lessen the load later.

- Play music or hang a TV in your kitchen to stay entertained as you do the dishes.
- Clean and organize cabinets to save frustration when putting away clean dishes.

Habit: Car Clutter

- Keep a plastic grocery bag under the seat for trash, and replace it once a week.
- Place a small coin purse in your glove box or cup holder to store loose change.
- Keep car documents together and tidy with a clip or rubber band.

Harnessing The Power of Your Brain

They say that you can't teach an old dog new tricks, but when it comes to the brain, scientists have discovered that this old adage simply isn't true. The human brain has an astonishing ability to adapt and change—even into old age. This ability is known as *neuroplasticity*. With the right stimulation, your brain can form new neural pathways, alter existing connections, and adapt and react in ever-changing ways.

The brain's incredible ability to reshape itself holds true when it comes to learning and memory. You can harness the natural power of neuroplasticity to increase your cognitive abilities, enhance your ability to learn new information, and improve your memory. Try these 20 tips to boost your brain power.

1) Meditate — Meditation has been shown to increase IQ, relieve stress, and promote higher levels of brain functioning. Meditation also activates the “prefrontal cortex” of the brain, an area responsible for advanced thinking ability and performance.

2) Draw A Picture — Drawing stimulates the right-hemisphere of the brain and inspires creativity. Get out the colored pencils and begin drawing your way to a powerful brain.

3) Exercise — Long-term exercise has been proven to increase brain power and even create new neurons in the brain. Go out and get a natural high off of your own brain chemistry through exercise!

4) Brainwave Entrainment — Brainwave entrainment is a safe, innovative way to stimulate and shape the brain and it’s functioning. You can literally build up more control over your life and harness your brain’s potential! For more info go to: www.stafford.edu/brainwavegroup

5) Avoid Junk Food – Junk food has been proven to decrease energy in the body and promotes “brain fog.” Cut some junk food from your diet, and reap the benefits of a more calm, focused brain chemistry.

6) Deep Breathing — Deep breathing actually increases oxygen levels and blood-flow to the brain. 10-15 minutes of daily deep breathing can make a huge difference in the quality of your life and brain’s functioning potential.

7) Learn A New Language — Learning adds more structure to the brain and improves the brain’s speech centers. Hablas espanol? It may be time for you

to take a class or program to supplement your job-skills and brain power!

8) Take Fish Oil — Fish oil supplements are literally like membrane material for the brain. The two primary components of EPA and DHA each act to strengthen both the emotional center of the brain and boost focus. There is an increase in overall brain activity after taking fish oil for awhile.

9) Laugh It Up — Laughter causes a natural release of the brain’s endorphins — chemicals that drown out pain and increase overall wellbeing. Laughter is a well known, natural stress reducer. Watch a comedy, crack a joke, and increase those endorphin levels!

10) Engage In Debate — A good, healthy debate strengthens the brain’s ability to think quickly and apply intelligence to verbal situations. Work to build up your brain power by engaging in plenty of healthy debate. Just ask someone who they are voting for in the presidential election and you’ll definitely provoke a debate!

11) Take A Multivitamin — Vitamins are great for the brain, and if it does not get enough of a certain vitamin through daily diet, consider a multivitamin. Multivitamins help facilitate the functioning of a healthy body and enriched brain. Start popping a vitamin each morning for awhile and chances are good that you’ll notice a difference!

12) Drink Red Wine — Alcohol in moderation has been proven to be good for the brain. Why? It is rich in antioxidants — chemicals that actually protect the brain! One glass daily for

women and two for men is generally considered a healthy amount.

13) Eat Healthy — You know what 'healthy' is, so why not eat healthy and improve your brain? The brain requires a certain amount of energy to reach it's maximum level of functioning. Eating chocolate cake and chips instead of fish and legumes, well maybe that's why you cannot think clearly.

14) Change Your Environment — To keep your brain properly stimulated, it is important to keep changing your environment. Drive a new route to work, eat at a new restaurant on Friday night. Changing the environment helps change the brain!

15) Set Goals — Setting goals activates areas of the brain associated with positive thinking and action. Setting goals is great for achieving success and prosperity in life and boosting your brain.

16) Listen To Music — Studies have proven that listening to music strengthens the right-hemisphere of the brain and literally changes the structure. Those same studies have found that people who listen to music are generally smarter and have more emotional intelligence than those who don't.

17) Be Empathetic — Being empathetic and trying to understand the emotions of others is a skill that your brain can learn. Being empathetic is definitely a powerful trait to have and allows your brain to relate to the emotions of others.

18) Avoid Stress — A little bit of stress will never hurt anybody. Too much stress actually causes detrimental

increases in the hormone "cortisol" which in high levels, kills brain cells and suppresses brain functioning.

19) Think Positive — If you are currently very good at thinking positively, chances are good that you already have a more powerful brain than those "Negative Nellies." Take ten minutes daily to think more positive and start noticing an improvement in thinking abilities and problem solving skills.

20) Brainstorm — A good brainstorming session to think of new, stimulating ideas is a great way to boost your brains ability to think creatively. Brainstorming is actually a different way of thinking that will equip your brain with a quick creative boost.

US lowers cutoff for lead poisoning in young kids

By MIKE STOBBE, AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — For the first time in 20 years, U.S. health officials have lowered the threshold for lead poisoning in young children.

The new standard announced Wednesday means that hundreds of thousands more youngsters could be diagnosed with high levels of lead. Too much lead is harmful to developing brains and can mean a lower IQ.

"Unfortunately, many, many more parents will be getting bad news," said Rebecca Morley, executive director of the National Center for Healthy Housing, a Maryland-based nonprofit focused on hazards to kids in homes. The standard is for children younger than 6. Recent research persuaded experts and government officials that

young children could be harmed from lead levels in their blood that are lower than the old standard.

Really, "there is no safe level of blood lead in children," said Christopher Portier, of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He heads the agency's environmental health programs. The CDC adopted recommendations made in January by an advisory panel of experts. At the same time, CDC officials acknowledged they don't have additional funds to help doctors or local health departments do more testing of children or find and clean up lead contamination. Lead poisoning is detected through a blood test. The change means poisoning will be defined as 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood. The old standard was 10 micrograms.

Under the old standard, lead poisoning in children had been declining in the U.S. Experts estimated that somewhere between 77,000 and 255,000 children had high levels of lead, though many of them are undiagnosed. The change could raise the count to 450,000 cases. Lead — a metal that for years was common in paint and gasoline — can harm a child's brain, kidneys and other organs. High levels in the blood can cause coma, convulsions and death. Lower levels can reduce intelligence, impair hearing and behavior and cause other problems.

Usually, children who get lead poisoning live in old homes that are dilapidated or under renovation. They pick up paint chips or dust and put it in their mouth. Lead has been banned in paint since 1978. Children have also picked up lead poisoning from soil contaminated by old

leaded gasoline, and from dust tracked in from industrial worksites.

Most cases of lead poisoning are handled by tracking and removing the lead source, and monitoring the children to make sure lead levels stay down. A special treatment to remove lead and other heavy metals is used for very high levels.

Specialists describe children as having lead poisoning only at those very high levels, but others use the term more broadly to describe any child with levels that can impact intelligence or cause other harm.

The CDC's threshold was last changed in 1991. The new standard was calculated from the highest lead levels seen in a comprehensive annual U.S. health survey. The CDC plans to reassess that level every four years.

Health officials have been focused on young children, who are most affected by lead poisoning. The CDC recommends testing for children who live in old housing or might otherwise be exposed to lead. About 15 percent of young children are tested, according to the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, a Baltimore-based organization.

For older children and adults, there is no lead poisoning threshold, although pregnant women should have blood lead levels below 5 micrograms to protect the developing fetus. Most cases in adults come from manufacturing jobs or hobbies, but those numbers have also been declining.

Some health officials consider the CDC's action overdue. Cleveland and other

cities in northeastern Ohio adopted a standard of 5 micrograms five years ago. The CDC was following recommendations made to the agency in January by an advisory panel of experts. But Portier said the agency wasn't able to do everything the panel suggested. For example, the panel said the CDC should do more to make sure no children are exposed to lead hazards. It also said all doctors should report high levels to local health departments, re-test the children to see if they improve, and help teach parents how to find and eliminate lead sources. The CDC agreed that should happen, but doesn't have the money or staff to bolster such an effort. Congress cut the CDC lead program's budget from about \$29 million last year to \$2 million.

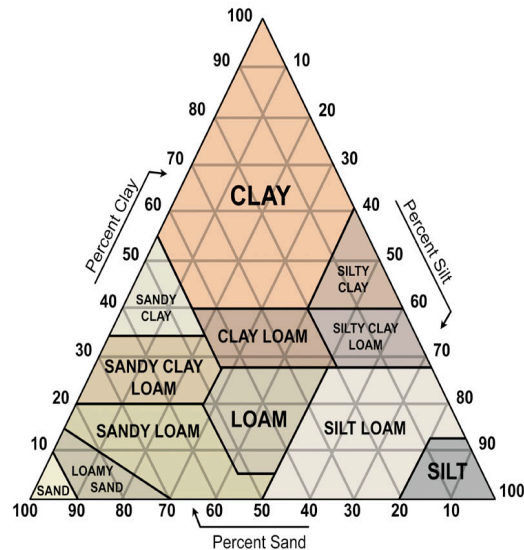
In many places, it's up to city and county health departments to provide many of the services for lead poisoned kids, and those departments have lost more than 34,000 jobs in the last three years because of budget cuts.

The timing is unfortunate, Morley said. "But we wouldn't want to keep information from parents just because there's not money to provide the service," she added.

SPOTLIGHT FOR JUNE / JULY A Little Something About Soils...

What is soil? What makes it a “good” soil or a “bad” soil? What can homeowners do to help their soil?

Questions...questions...questions! Here is a brief intro to try to provide some answers. First, what is soil? The Soil Science Society of America's definition



of soil is “the unconsolidated (loose) mineral or organic material on the

immediate surface of the Earth that serves as a natural medium for the growth of land plants.” Over the years, soil scientists have worked to define and categorize soil characteristics. One important characteristic is *texture*. Quite simply, soil texture is the relative proportion of sand, silt, and clay in the soil. As shown in the figure, there are twelve textural classes:

Sand, silt, and clay are defined by particle size. Sand is the largest (.05-2.0 mm), next is silt (.05-.002 mm), and clay is the smallest (less than .002 mm). Loam is the combination of sand, silt, and clay such that they feel to be of equal proportion. The ideal proportion is typically 40% sand, 40% silt, and 20% clay. The addition of organic matter (such as compost) to loam makes for a productive, well-draining soil.

Soil scientists tend not to think of “good” or “bad” soils; instead, they look to see if the soil is suitable for a particular use. For example, the desired soil characteristics of a site for a pond would be quite different than for a septic

system drainfield. In a garden or lawn situation, homeowners may find that their soil has either too much clay or too much sand. To improve a clayey soil, both sand and organic matter would be added. There are many clayey and sandy soils in the North Carolina Coastal Plains. Submitting soil samples to the NC Department of Agriculture (NCDA&CS) is a great way to learn about your soils and what they may need. Different plants have different requirements; it is not “one size fits all.” For example, many of our soils are acidic (low pH) and require lime to be added to grow lawns and vegetables; however, some plants like a lower pH. Nutrient requirements, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, also vary.

Samples may be brought to your local NC Cooperative Extension office in a one-quart baggie, for transfer into the soil sample boxes. There is also a form that needs to be completed. We will then ship your samples to NCDA&CS for you. After you get your soil results, agents and Master Gardeners at your local Cooperative Extension office will be happy to decipher them for you.

Soil Word Find:

loam	organic	compost	analysis
sand	nitrogen	texture	suitable
silt	phosphorus	nutrients	pH
clay	mulch	moisture	roots
coastal	plain	plants	sun

m c e r u t x e t m r
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