

HEALTH



Things to consider when

choosing toys for Christmas



Pediatrics in Brevard
Dr. Aniela Jan Borowski
Guest columnist

It is that time of year again. The time when we look for the perfect Christmas gifts for our little ones.

As a pediatrician, mother and now grandmother, I have always felt it was important to choose Christmas gifts for my children that encouraged learning and curiosity — whether it was a book, an educational game or toys that

simply provided both fun and instructional experiences.

Similarly, the Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and Healthychildren.org have recommendations that provide advice on gift giving and the importance of being cautious when purchasing toys for younger children.

There are many safe and harmless toys, but there are also hazardous and unsafe toy options.

We know “play” for children is extremely important in their development. What constitutes the best type of toys for “play” to support child interaction has evolved over the years.

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Got high cholesterol? Let food be your medicine



Nutrition for Today
Susie Bond
Guest columnist

Nearly 29 million adult Americans have high cholesterol levels.

Total cholesterol levels less than 200 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) are considered desirable for adults.

A reading between 200 and 239 mg/dL is considered borderline high and a reading of 240 mg/dL and above is considered high.

High levels of cholesterol can increase your risk of heart disease.

So what if you have a number in the high risk range?

You can take medicine, which is very

effective. But medications come with a hefty price tag and often with undesirable side effects.

A better option might be to adjust your eating habits to include foods proven to lower cholesterol, and to cut back on those that raise it.

Let’s take a look at some powerful substances in foods that can help lower your cholesterol and reduce your risk.

Soluble fiber has been scientifically proven to lower cholesterol. It is found in oats, barley, nuts, seeds, beans, some fruits such as apples, and flaxseed.

Plant sterols are derived from vegetable oils and plants. They inhibit the absorption of cholesterol in the diet by blocking it from entering the blood

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Flaxseeds are a good source of soluble fiber, which has been scientifically proven to lower cholesterol. FLICKR

Heart-Healthy Power Breakfast

- ½ cup oats
 - 1 cup fat-free or low-fat milk (use soy milk, if desired)
 - Ground cinnamon
 - 2 Tbsp. walnuts
 - Chopped apple
 - 1 Tbsp. ground flaxseed
 - Small amount of sweetener
- Mix oats, milk and cinnamon in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in uncovered bowl for 2 minutes. Stir in walnuts, apple and flaxseed. Enjoy!

Diabetes can severely damage your retinas



Focus on Eyes
Dr. Frederick Ho
Guest columnist

Diabetes is a disease of elevated blood sugar because the body does not produce or use insulin effectively.

Excessive level of blood sugar for a prolonged period of time can damage the heart, kidneys, nerves, blood vessels and eyes.

The most common form of diabetic eye disease is diabetic retinopathy.

The retina is inside the eye and functions like the film in an old fashioned camera.

It captures images of the outside world and allows us to see. Diabetes can damage the blood vessels in the retina.

There are two stages of diabetic retinopathy.

Non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy, or NPDR, is the early form of diabetic retinopathy.

The retinal blood vessels leak and cause swelling of the retina. When the macula or the center of retina is swollen, it is called macular edema. This is the most common cause of blurry vision in patients with diabetic eye disease.

Proliferative diabetic retinopathy, or PDR, is the advanced stage of diabetic

retinopathy when abnormal fragile blood vessels grow on the retina.

These blood vessels tear easily and bleed inside the eye.

With mild bleeding, you see a lot of black floaters. The vision will be very blurry if there is a lot of bleeding.

These abnormal blood vessels can form scar tissue which pulls on the retina causing retinal detachment.

The primary treatment of diabetic eye disease is to address the underlying problem — diabetes.

You should work with your physicians to maintain a stable healthy blood sugar level throughout the day. Regular exercise and healthy diet also help.

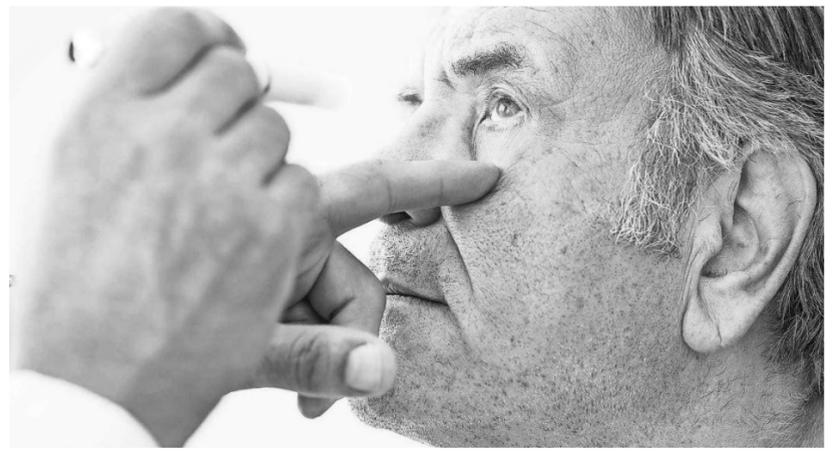
Regular eye check-ups with dilated retina examination is essential to detect diabetic retinopathy since NPDR and early stage PDR can be asymptomatic.

A group of medications known as anti-VEGF, including Eylea, Avastin and Lucentis reduce macular edema and recover some visual loss.

These medications are given by injection into the eyes on regular intervals. Steroid injection is another treatment option for retinal swelling.

Laser can be used to seal leaky blood vessels to decrease retinal swelling.

Laser to the outer retina can help to shrink and prevent the growth of abnormal blood vessels in PDR. This prevents



Another reason to control diabetes is because it can affect the eyes. Diabetes can damage the blood vessels in the retina. GETTY IMAGES

and stops hemorrhage inside the eye.

In advanced PDR, an intraocular surgery known as vitrectomy may be required to remove the hemorrhage inside eye or repair retinal detachment caused by PDR.

Diabetic eye disease can be a very serious sight threatening condition.

If you have diabetes and notice any visual changes, contact your ophthalmologist promptly and get treatment for diabetic retinopathy as soon as possi-

ble.

In addition to taking care of your blood sugar, regular eye examination is the best mean to prevent visual loss.

Dr. Frederick Ho, the medical director of Atlantic Eye MD and Atlantic Surgery and Laser Center, is a board certified ophthalmologist. Atlantic Eye MD is located at 8040 N. Wickham Road in Melbourne. To make an appointment please call (321) 757-7272. To learn more visit AtlanticEyeMD.com.

Touchless thermometers reasonably accurate



The People's Pharmacy
Joe Graedon and Teresa Graedon

Q: Whenever I go to the doctor's office, a nurse weighs me, takes my temperature and measures my blood pressure. These days, I really do not like them sticking a thermometer under my tongue, even in its little plastic sleeve.

How reliable are the touchless devices I have seen on television news reports? Are they available to consumers?

A: The devices you are referring to are called noncontact infrared thermometers (NCITs). They detect infrared radiation coming off the human body and turn it into a digital signal.

A systematic review and meta-analysis of infrared thermal scanners was recently published in the Journal of

Travel Medicine (Oct. 10, 2020). The authors reviewed 30 studies from 15 countries and concluded that handheld infrared thermometers were reasonably accurate and can safely be used for screening. They are not as good for babies and may not be as precise as oral thermometers. There are many brands of infrared thermometers available online or in pharmacies for around \$30.

Don't rely on temperature alone, though, to detect COVID-19. People can spread the coronavirus before they have a fever or other symptoms.

Q: I am a healthy "young senior" (66). When I get my flu shot this year, do I need to get the super double dose for seniors?

A: A study that was recently presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions (Nov. 17, 2020) compared high-dose with standard-dose flu vaccine. The participants were at especially high risk for influenza complications because they had heart disease. The randomized controlled study involving 5,260 volunteers lasted three

years.

The authors reported that the "higher dose influenza vaccine was not more effective than the standard dose in lowering the risk of death or hospitalizations from heart or lung-related illnesses."

Q: After I read on your website that lisinopril could cause hand tremors, I asked my doctor to change my blood pressure medication. I had been on HCTZ/lisinopril for at least 10 years. She said she hadn't heard of any connection between the two and suggested I see a neurologist. I said, let's try changing my medication first.

She increased my HCTZ to 25 mg. I took no other medication. Within three days, my hand tremors were essentially gone. I was able to polish my own fingernails. Thank you for bringing this information forward.

A: A dry cough is the most common complication of ACE inhibitors like lisinopril. We're not surprised that your doctor was unaware of tremor as a side effect. Most electronic drug databases

that physicians rely on don't list this adverse reaction.

We too were unaware of it until a reader reported hand tremor associated with lisinopril. When we checked the Food and Drug Administration-approved prescribing information, we found that tremor is a recognized reaction, though it is considered rare.

It's good that you have found that the diuretic hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) alone is effective for you. Keeping blood pressure under control is important to protect your heart and your brain. You can learn more about the pros and cons of antihypertensive drugs from our eGuide to Blood Pressure Solutions. There are also recommendations on accurate BP measuring devices. It is available in the Health eGuides section at www.PeoplesPharmacy.com.

In their column, Joe and Teresa Graedon answer letters from readers. Write to them in care of King Features, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803, or email them via their website: PeoplesPharmacy.com.

Borowski

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According to the AAP and HealthyChildren.org, that evolution is something to think about when purchasing toys for gift giving.

- Consider age appropriate gifts and always watch for toy safety recalls.
- Think BIG gifts to avoid choking hazards for younger children.

- Avoid purchasing toys that shoot objects into the air as they can cause eye injuries and/or choking.
- Watch for noise levels to prevent damage to their hearing.

- Buy them books! Books are great gifts for children. Reading has been associated with improved literacy and books will never go out of style.
- Avoid hobby/chemistry kits for children younger than 12 years old.
- Avoid electronics as they have been shown to decrease "play," for both active (exercise) and interactive (social skills). Further, there are concerns that electronics also promote aggressive behavior and obesity. Conversely, there may be learning benefits with some interactive media, but there is no evidence that the learning is better than "hands on pretend play" with traditional toys. When children use electronics there is often less interaction with the caregiver, which is felt to be adversely critical in all stages of



Children who play video games tend to be more aggressive and less social. GETTY IMAGES

their development.

- Give them puzzles. Problem solving with puzzles exercises a child's fine motor skills, so puzzles are always a great gift idea. For those with special needs, additional guidance with therapists is often beneficial for puzzles.
- Consider buying high-quality traditional toys such as blocks, balls, dolls, cars, cooking utensils, puzzles, toy letters and card games.

Remember, gifts do not need to be expensive. What consistently stands out in studies of toys for learning is the caregiver's engagement in play while building on the contribution that toys can make has a positive impact on a

child's development.

Subsequently, pretending through the use of play with dolls, animals, cars and food items can promote positive language, teaching and training disciplines.

Additionally, counting, exploring the differences between toys for color, texture and shape promote cognitive development.

So, these types of toy alternatives are great options for learning.

Additionally, a caregiver's engagement is the primary factor in making these experiences a rich, traditional necessity for learning.

Speaking of traditional, most fam-

ilies have memories full of annual holiday traditions; though unfortunately, COVID-19 has caused many families to change this season's traditions and schedules due to the pandemic.

Taking time for tradition with our children as "we don't come by this way again" makes me remember the most memorable holiday season I had while working as a missionary physician in St. Lucia.

There, I truly saw traditional play; soccer balls being kicked around, an old bike rim being manipulated with a stick to roll down the street; everything could and would be used for play by the children in St. Lucia.

But when I asked what those same children received as gifts they would always look confused. When I asked if they had a good meal that day, they would beam and say "yes" with an emphatic nod and smile. As I boarded a plane home and heard the complaints of children over minor wants, I realized, it truly is with less that we often appreciate more.

My message to you this holiday is to keep it simple and find what you feel is an important "tradition."

This could be a song, a meal, time together no matter how "distanced" we are and simply savor the term, "that in less.....we just might find more."

Dr. Aniela Jan Borowski is a Board Certified Pediatrician for Pediatrics in Brevard.

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stream. Good food sources are vegetables and fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds — many of the same foods that contain soluble fiber. Plant sterols are also available in supplement form.

Omega-3 fatty acids are found in fish and seafood. They have many

unique health properties, including those that help keep the heart healthy. The American Heart Association recommends that we consume fish at least twice a week in order to reduce risk.

Soy is a superherb for lots of reasons, one of which is that it can help lower cholesterol. Try to include it in your diet whenever you can. Sources include tofu, soy milk, soy nuts, edamame and most veggie burgers.

Nuts supply a whole host of heart-

healthy substances. A one-ounce serving per day provides good amounts of these nutrients.

It's also important to limit our intake of saturated fats. The American Heart Association recommends that no more than 6% of total calories come from saturated fat.

For an average person who requires 2,000 calories per day, no more than 13 grams should be from saturated fat. Read food labels to determine saturated

fat content of foods.

So be sure to include generous amounts of oats, nuts, seeds, beans, apples, soy, and fish in your diet, and pay attention to saturated fat, to help lower cholesterol and keep your heart healthy and strong.

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