



MEET OUR NEW PHYSICIAN

DR. LAURA DIAZ

Laura M. Diaz, MD, FAAP, received her BA degree in Biology and Economics from Douglass College at Rutgers University. She continued to complete her medical degree at Rutgers – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway, NJ. She completed her pediatric residency at RWJUH/Bristol-Myers Squibb Children’s Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ, during which time she received the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award. Following residency, she worked as a Chief Resident and was an Instructor of Pediatrics at RWJUH/Bristol-Myers Squibb Children’s Hospital. She continues to serve as a Per-Diem Clinical Instructor for pediatric residents in the Pediatric Emergency Room at RWJUH. Her interests include newborn care, adolescent health and asthma management.

Dr. Diaz lives in Plainfield, NJ, with her husband, son, and rescue pup. When she is not working, she enjoys salsa dancing, Afro-Puerto Rican drumming, hiking, home decorating and fishing with her family. Dr. Diaz is fluent in Spanish. Dr. Diaz is a board-certified pediatrician and a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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CURRENT EVENTS:

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS IN AN ERA OF GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence is becoming even more of a public issue due to current events over the past few years. Gun violence kills more than 36,000 Americans every year, averaging about 100 deaths a day. Deaths due to gun violence in 2017 were at the highest rate in 40 years. That year, 39,773 deaths were due to guns. Gun violence is not limited to just mass shootings; it includes suicides (61% of all gun deaths), homicides (35%), law enforcement shootings (1.4%), and unintentional shootings (1.3%). Gun violence is also not limited to deaths, as on average, 100,000 Americans are wounded, many times with severe complications, each year due to guns.

This being said, it is important to have a conversation with your children about this issue as they are continuously hearing about it, whether it is in school or from the media. For example, most schools have active shooter drills in place which are as common as fire drills. The risk of a student dying in a school shooting reached an all-time high in 2018 and 60% of teens surveyed said they worried that there would be a shooting at their school. The conversation around this topic can be started just by hearing something on the radio or something on the TV that discusses gun violence and asking your child what they know about it. It is essential to allow your child to have time to express their own thoughts and feelings and ask questions when needed.

With an era of violence and media which presents the issue to kids at all time, it is important to talk to your kids about what this means. Monitor the media your child is exposed to including television and online, as photographs or videos of gun violence can cause anxiety or fright especially in young children.

Age also has an impact on the conversation. The conversation you may have with your 5 year old about active shooter drills that he/she may be doing in schools and what they've heard about current events will be completely different than the conversation you will have with your 13 year old. Younger children, generally younger than 12 years old, need to only have a general understanding of what's happening. But as your child get older and grows as a teenager, discussing political, social, and moral issues around gun use and subsequently, gun violence can be especially important. For preschool and kindergarten aged children, tell them a one-sentence story similar to parents' beliefs and try to focus on the heroes. Elementary school children are extremely inquisitive so its important to figure out how much information you would like to share with them. It is still important to try to shield them from photographs and videos at this age as well. With tweens, middle school aged children, you should focus more on how they are feeling about the issue and then can discuss values. Lastly, it is recommended to discuss with teenagers what they can do to bring about change and how they could fix it.

For all ages, one of first and most important aspects of this discussion is to assure them that you will do everything in your power to keep your child safe. A clinical psychologist suggests saying, "I will never take you anywhere or put you in any place where there is danger. My primary job as a parent is to protect you. And I will always do my best to keep you safe." Though there are situations that may be out of your control, that should not be emphasized in this discussion. It is also important to understand that you cannot shield your child from these issues completely and thus, it can be more helpful to discuss what has been happening rather than ignoring the topic. Another important facet of this conversation that should be discussed is proper gun safety, even in loose terms. These should include that a child should never touch a gun and only grownups can use guns if they have a license. Explain that any guns in the house are locked and kids won't be able to access them. Be sure to properly discuss the difference between a toy gun and a real gun along with the very real consequences of using one. Though the conversation is a difficult one, it is important to discuss these topics with your children as it is ever present in the media and in school.



SUPPLEMENT SAFETY

CREATINE AND PROTEIN SHAKES

With the myriad of supplements available, there is a lot of confusion regarding what is safe to take. Many companies promote supplements as natural, safe alternatives to medicine or methods to boost or enhance your body/immune system. In general, supplements are not regulated by the FDA and do not have to provide scientific data to support their claims. Many of these bold claims lack scientific research on safety as well as the short and long-term effects of the supplements. To ensure supplement safety, it is important to make sure that the information you receive regarding supplements is based from a scholarly source and to consult with your provider or a medical professional before taking a supplement.

A popular supplement is protein powder. Proteins are the building blocks of the human body and carry out many of the body's vital daily functions. Protein powder can be added to a variety of foods such as smoothies, liquids, baked goods etc., and are usually taken to either gain weight or help facilitate muscle growth. Although these "protein shakes" are very popular, they are not usually necessary for children, even athletes, and can lead to unwanted health consequences.



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Generally children between the ages of:

- 4 – 9 years need 19 grams of protein per day
- 9 – 13 years need 34 grams of protein per day
- 14 – 18 years (BOYS) need 52 grams of protein per day
- 14 – 18 years (GIRLS) need 46 grams of protein per day

Taking additional protein supplements like creatine or whey protein often exceeds a child or adolescents' protein needs. Excess protein is processed by our kidneys and over time can lead to kidney stones and in prolonged exposure, kidney damage.

The best way to prepare for a workout or any athletic activity is to make sure you are well nourished and hydrated, rather than take supplements. To make sure that your child is properly fueled, encourage them to eat a snack higher in carbohydrates and protein as well as drink 16-24 oz of water 1-2 hours prior to their activity.

IT'S FLU SHOT SEASON

[CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES ON AVAILABILITY OF THE ANNUAL FLU SHOT](#)

It's time for your child's yearly flu vaccine. This year we will also be offering the flumist, a nasal spray. Flumist contains a live weakened flu virus. Side effects of the flumist are comparable to the flu shot and include low-grade fever, sore throat, fatigue, congestion, and body aches. Please remember that neither the flumist nor the flu shot can cause the flu.

Influenza is an illness that can cause potential hospitalization and death due to severe complications. Globally, 650,000 people die from respiratory complications linked to the seasonal flu every year. Your child needs to be immunized against the flu every year because every flu season is different. It is really important for children above the age of 6 months to be immunized, but especially for children under age 2 as they are at the high risk for severe complications. Children with asthma and chronic health conditions are also at a higher risk. For children under the age of 6 months, be sure to have family in close contact with the baby immunized against the flu and practice good handwashing and hygiene. Try to avoid taking your infant out to large public areas in the midst of flu season where they can easily catch the virus.

Please check our website and emails sent to you for updates on flushot availability and flu clinics in our office.

Credit: Heather Hazzan, *SELF Magazine*

TRICK OR TREAT SAFETY

[BOO! THE TIME AROUND HALLOWEEN SHOULD BE FILLED WITH TREATS AND COSTUMES, NOT REAL SCARY STORIES.](#)

Here are a few times to be safe when trick or treating:

- Avoid trick-or-treating alone. Walk in groups or with a trusted adult.
- Hold a flashlight while trick-or-treating to make it easier to see.
- Walk from house to house instead of running.
- Look both ways before crossing the street and use crosswalks where available.
- Wear reflective tape or items on your clothing at night.
- Costume accessories should be short, soft, and flexible.
- Wear well-fitting masks, costumes, and shoes to avoid injury.
- Examine all treats for choking hazards and tampering before eating.
- Avoid home-made treats.
- Limit the amount of treats you eat.
- Only walk on sidewalks or on the far edge of the road facing traffic.
- Never accept rides from strangers. Only visit well-lit houses. Don't enter any homes unless with a trusted adult.
- Test make-up on a small area to check for sensitivities and allergies. Remove it before going to bed.

IS GRANDMA RIGHT?

FACT OR FICTION?

<p>“You can catch a cold from cold weather”</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Colds are caused by viruses. You can't catch a cold from being outside in cold weather without a coat or with wet hair.</p>
<p>“Feed a cold, starve a fever”</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>While it is true that children will often not want to eat as much when they are sick, they still need calories and fluids to stay hydrated. Whether they have a cold or fever (or both!), make sure your child is drinking plenty of fluids to stay hydrated and offer food and snacks as you normally do.</p>
<p>“When a runny nose turns green or yellow, you need antibiotics”</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Green or yellow nasal mucus occurs commonly with viruses and does not mean that your child has a bacterial sinus infection or needs antibiotics. Viruses can last 7-10 days and often cause sinus symptoms such as thick, colored nasal mucus and face pain. Drinking plenty of fluids, applying warm compresses for face pain, and time are often the only treatment necessary. Antibiotics do not treat viruses.</p>
<p>“Chicken noodle soup can help colds”</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Warm liquids such as chicken noodle soup can be soothing to the respiratory system, help to loosen up secretions, and increase the flow of nasal mucus, which makes them easier to remove. It also helps to keep children hydrated.</p>
<p>“Children need cough medicine when they have a cold”</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Cough medicines are not recommended and can be harmful to children under 6 years old. Additionally, cough medicines including decongestants have not been shown to benefit children of any age, have side effects (stomach pain, drowsiness, dizziness, heart palpitations etc), and do not make colds go away faster.</p>
<p>“Fever is bad and always needs to be treated”</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Fever is your body's way of fighting off illnesses. Fevers can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and other illnesses. Antibiotics only treat fevers that are caused by bacterial infections. Antibiotics do not treat colds (viruses). School-aged children can catch 8-12 colds in a year. They may get fevers with these viruses, but fevers should not last more than a few days. If they do, you should have your child evaluated by a doctor. You don't always need to give Tylenol or Motrin for a fever in a child. These medications help with comfort, but they don't make the illness go away faster. <u>Exception:</u> If your child is under 2 months of age and gets a fever, you should see a doctor immediately. A fever in a young infant can be a sign of a more severe illness.</p>
<p>“Honey and salt water gargles help cough/sore throat”</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Honey has antioxidant and antimicrobial properties, which can help with colds and sore throats, but it should only be given to children over 1 year of age. Honey has been shown to decrease the amount and severity of coughing, especially at nighttime. ½- 1 teaspoon of honey can be given as needed. Children who are at least 6 yrs old can gargle with warm salt water, which can also help to ease a sore throat. Mix ¼ to ½ teaspoon of salt per 8 ounces of warm water. Have your child gargle, swish, and spit it out the mixture and repeat as needed.</p>
<p>“I should give my child a cool bath to bring down a fever”</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Baths have not been shown to bring down fevers. It is okay to give your child a bath if you think it will help make him or her more comfortable, but it is not necessary to do it just because of the fever.</p>
<p>“The higher the fever, the more severe the illness”</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Sometimes a child might have a high fever and this can be scary for a parent. A true fever is 100.4 F or higher. Higher fevers do not necessarily mean the illness is more severe. Viruses can cause higher fevers (102-105 F). Unless the fever is 106 F or higher, the way your child is acting is more important than how high the fever is. Fevers that last more than a few days or any child who is acting differently, in pain, not eating or drinking, not urinating should be evaluated by health care provider immediately.</p>
<p>“Handwashing is the best way avoid getting sick”</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Frequent hand-washing and avoiding touching your face (mouth, nose, and eyes) are the best ways to prevent spread of the common cold. You can catch a cold from touching surfaces that the virus is on or from coming in contact with other people who are sick.</p>



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

MEET OUR NEW LCSW: KAREN MORLEY

Over the past several years, pediatricians have seen an increase in mental health concerns in their offices. Research shows that a pediatrician may discuss a mental health concern with a parent up to 6-10 years prior to a child receiving the help they need. In those years, a minor problem can turn into a major difficulty for a child to overcome.

In response to this, a movement called Collaborative Care has been developing across the US, and it involves having a social worker partner with a pediatrician's office to address mental health concerns. One of the main goals is to accurately assess mental health symptoms and make sure that the patient is getting the right level of care to successfully overcome their symptoms, before they grow into larger problems.

Watchung Pediatrics has hired Karen Morley, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, to assist our patients and families in exactly this way. If you have a mental health concern for your child – behavior issues, anxiety, depression, substance use, school difficulties, family conflict – please speak to your medical provider about getting connected with Karen. Karen and your provider will work as a team to address your concerns. After an assessment of the situation, Karen can match you with the right level of treatment, which may include counseling with her in our office or a connection with a qualified provider in the community.

Karen completed both her undergraduate degree in Education and graduate degree in Social Work at West Virginia University. Karen has been practicing with children and adolescents for over 20 years. Prior to working at Watchung Pediatrics, she was working as an LCSW at Goryeb Children's Hospital which is a part of Morristown Medical Center.

KIDS KORNER

HOW TO MAKE PINECONE PORCUPINES



SUPPLIES

- pine cones
- light brown and black felt
- googly eyes
- hot glue
- scissors

INSTRUCTIONS

- Go for a walk in your local neighborhood and find some pinecones for the craft.
- Take the light brown piece of felt and cut it into a triangle shape with rounded corners. This will become the face.
- Take the black felt and cut a small circle. This will become the nose.
- Glue the googly eyes and nose to the triangle felt piece.
- Glue the face on the front of the pinecone.

And now your pinecone porcupine is complete!

