

Happy October! After months of temperatures in the 90s and tons of humidity (which I actually love), October and cooler temperatures have arrived. Even a little fog this morning set the stage for a month of scary movies capped off by teachers' worst nightmare- the day after Halloween! This year I already have my Halloween costume selected so that I'm not running over to Party City on October 30th to snag whatever costume is left.

DIRECT PEDIATRICS- LANDIS LAKES OPENS

Today is the grand opening of Direct Pediatrics- Landis Lakes with Dr. Kyle Stewart leading the way as the first pediatrician in the new office. The office is in the Landis Lakes shopping center at the entrance of Lake Forest, so if you know people in that area who would appreciate the service and convenience of Direct Pediatrics, have them call the new office at 502-861-6067.

Does the new office have any impact on the families at Direct Pediatrics- Norton Commons? Only positive effects as Dr. Stewart will be able to see my patients on the rare occasion that I am out of town and someone needs to be seen in person (to have ears checked or lungs listened to for example).

WELCOME KAITLYN

With Hannah moving over to DP- Landis Lakes (cutting her morning commute in half), Kaitlynn will be taking over nursing duties at DP- Norton Commons.(in addition to Meredith who will continue to work alternating Tuesdays and Fridays). Kaitlynn spent the past 9 years working at Oldham County Pediatrics and prior to that has worked in hospital ICU settings. She has enjoyed 20+ years of horseback riding, sewing and dog training. Kaitlynn, her husband and 4 year-old daughter live in Crestwood.

WHAT'S NEW THIS MONTH?

When we ask our families if there are things we can do to be as helpful as possible, we mean it. We actually spend time every week just discussing ways to provide the optimal services for the kids who come here. When some of our families mentioned the hassle, wait and costs associated with getting allergy shots at the allergy office, we agreed that we could take over allergy shots at our office.

- Starting this week, we will begin administering allergy shots for our patients in the office. Families are responsible for getting the allergy vials to us and we will refrigerate them. Patients must wait in the office for 30 minutes after their shot per American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology guidelines.
- J-TIPS! At my old office, if kids needed labs that were not available in the office, we sent them to Norton to get the labs drawn. Norton used J-tips for blood draws to make the experience less painful. Well, now we have J-tips at Direct Pediatrics! What is a J-tip? It's a "jet" of compressed CO2 gas to propel buffered lidocaine into the subcutaneous tissue without the use of a needle. If we have to collect blood to send to an outside lab, we will be able to make the experience as pain-free as possible with J-tips.

EVERYONE HATES COUGHS, BUT...

It's the middle of the night and you and your child have been up most of the night due to your child's coughing. At times he coughs enough to vomit. I know, I've been there as all 3 of my kids went to daycare and for years it seemed like someone in our house was always coughing during the winter months. As annoying as coughs are, there's an argument to be made that the cough is more of the hero than the villain...

- The real villain is the virus (80% of the time) or the allergies (15% of the time) that is producing the extra mucus. The mucus coming out the nose is the tip of the iceberg with the majority of the mucus draining down the back of the throat.
- When kids and adults are sitting or standing, most of that mucus drains straight down the throat, into the stomach and is pooped out (this is why poop may be looser or greenish when you have a cold).

- However, the hole leading down into the lungs (trachea) is right in front of the hole that leads to your stomach (esophagus), and when you lie down, a significant amount of that mucus drains down your trachea into your lungs.
- To protect your lungs that are essential for breathing, your body coughs to clear the mucus out of the lungs where it is spit out or pooped out (don't worry if your child doesn't spit out their mucus, because it's coming out one way or another)!
- So give them some cough medicine? NO! The whole point of the cough is to protect the lungs. When you give them something to suppress the cough, you increase the amount of mucus settling in the lungs, increasing the likelihood of your child developing a lung infection like pneumonia.
- It turns out oral cough and cold medicines don't do anything (at best) and increase the likelihood of developing pneumonia with some wild side effects at worst. When my oldest was 2 (before I was in medical school), he hallucinated that buffalo were in his room after taking generic Triaminic. After doing some research, I learned that a rare but serious side effect of some cough/cold medicines is the hallucinations of large furry animals!
- Numerous studies have been done comparing cough/cold medicines to a placebo and the results consistently show that the medicines are not helpful. In September of 2023, the FDA concluded that phenylephrine (a major ingredient in cough/cold medicines) was useless, but failed to remove all the cough/cold medicines containing phenylephrine due to the "economic impact" removing the cough/cold medicines would have. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended banning cough/cold medications for children under 6, but pharmacies have refused.
- So what can be done to help with coughs while we wait for our bodies to kill the virus causing the mucus? The following have been studied and found to be help, but nothing will make a cough go away as long as mucus needs to be cleared from the lungs
 - Honey (for kids >1); 5-10ml of honey every 4-6 hours during the day and then double the dose before bedtime. Honey coats the back of the throat and has anti-inflammatory properties. Once this research came out about the effectiveness of honey, all the cough/cold medicines started adding honey, but it's only the honey (like in the bear at the grocery store) that's effective- not cough/cold medicine with honey
 - Nasal saline rinse (like the NeilMed sinus rinse bottle or Neti-pot); Since draining mucus is the problem, flushing out the mucus, especially before bed and before school, may be the most effective of all the treatments. No mucus, no cough
 - Eucalyptus, camphor and menthol lotion on the chest (i.e. Vicks vaporub) (for kids>2). I just read a study today showing that it reduces cough and congestion and is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
 - Upright positioning in bed. Easier said than done, but the more upright you are, the more the mucus drains into the stomach and the less into the lungs.
- If you suspect the excess mucus may be caused by allergies, it's always reasonable for those over 2 to try 1-2 days of claritin/zyrtec to see if it dries up the mucus. If it's allergies, you should notice a significant difference. If it's not allergies, stop the claritin/zyrtec as these medicines tend to prolong a viral illness by a few days
- What about...antibiotics, vitamin C, steroids, zinc, echinacea, essential oils, etc.? When all of these (and lots of other interventions) are compared to a placebo, none of these treatments show consistent improvement over no intervention
- But my child is coughing so much he's vomiting! Unfortunately some kids have a strong gag reflex that's triggered by coughing. While this is a messy issue, he probably feels better after vomiting as it clears out the mucus in his stomach. Even anti-nausea medications don't help much with this as it's less an issue of nausea and more an issue of gag reflex. If your child has a strong gag reflex, have a trash can nearby!
- When should I worry about the cough?
 - Any time it looks like your child is having a hard time breathing related (or not related) to a cough, your child should be seen right away. This might look like breathing much faster than normal, flaring of nostrils and/or using extra muscles in the chest, neck and/or stomach area to help breathe.
 - If your child has asthma, then the cough may be related to an asthma flare rather than excess mucus in the lungs. If your child has a history of asthma and has a cough that won't go away or is struggling to breathe in addition to the coughing, treat the asthma with the rescue inhaler and have your child seen right away

- If the cough is barky (like a barking seal), this is likely due to croup. The barkiness is caused by coughing/crying through swollen vocal cords. In this case, steroids can help shrink the vocal cords as swollen vocal cords can interfere with comfortable breathing. If your child is NOT coughing/crying but is making the barking sound when breathing (stridor), they need to be seen right away
- If your child has no cold symptoms and suddenly starts coughing repeatedly, they may be choking or have something in their airway and should be evaluated ASAP.

GOODBYE CAFFEINE

Now that I don't have to be up past midnight to finish notes, I figured it was time to break the caffeine habit (dating back at least to the start of med school in 2007) and have been caffeine-free for the past 6 days! Days 1-4 were a little rough, but the headaches have resolved and caffeine-free life is looking good!

Have a great October. I think we'll be passing out Halloween Candy at the office on Halloween for those who want to see Dr. Johnson decked out in his costume!

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