Having a sinus headache can be like having a clogged kitchen sink. In both cases, you may just need a little drainage.

Sinus cavities are hollow areas behind your cheeks, eyes, nose and forehead. Mucus usually flows from your sinuses to your nose. If one of your sinuses becomes swollen because of allergies or some other cause, it can become clogged. Pressure can build up and lead to pain. Other signs of sinus headache can include congestion, pain in the upper teeth or jaw, and facial swelling.

Sneezing, itching or a runny nose suggest that allergies are triggering your sinus problems.

### Does a summer breeze make you sneeze?

If so, you’re not alone. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), millions of people worldwide have seasonal allergies that make them snuffle and sneeze each spring and summer.

But that’s no reason not to enjoy this warm, sunny time of year. You can take steps to reduce hay fever’s impact on your life. Here’s what you need to know about allergies and how to manage them.

### What causes allergies?

Allergies are the result of genetics. Just as some people are born with blue eyes or brown hair, some are born with hay fever, says the AAAAI. These allergies occur because the immune system mistakes common substances, such as pollen or house dust, for a threat to the body. And this reaction can trigger coughing, sneezing, sniffling, itching and other responses.

In hay fever, the most common allergens are pollen from plants and trees and mold spores—tiny fungi that float through the air in warm temperatures.

### Staying sneeze-free

To help control hay fever:

- Stay indoors during peak pollen and mold times. This is usually between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. You can get updates on pollen and mold counts in your area at the AAAAI website at [www.aaaai.org/nab](http://www.aaaai.org/nab).
- Wear a face mask when outdoors.
- Find someone else to mow and rake the lawn.
- Shower after spending time outside. This helps wash allergens from your skin and hair.
- Keep windows closed, and use an air conditioner if you have one.
- Ask your doctor about allergy medications and shots. A doctor can prescribe medicines that help prevent allergy symptoms. You also may be a candidate for allergy shots, which can reduce your sensitivity to allergens over time.

The main thing to remember about hay fever is that help is available. Your doctor can recommend treatment and tips to help control allergy symptoms.
living well WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

A cold will run its course, and an upset stomach will usually fade away.

That’s the comforting thing about the otherwise unpleasant nature of being sick: A lot of the illnesses we encounter in life will last for just a short while.

There are, however, some health problems that don’t go away so easily. These are known as chronic illnesses. If you have one, you may live with that illness for an extended period of time—perhaps the rest of your life.

Challenging times  According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, more than a quarter of all Americans have at least two chronic medical conditions. Examples of chronic conditions are high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and arthritis. Many times these conditions are treatable, but they usually cannot be cured.

People with chronic illness may feel overwhelmed and uncertain about what the future will hold for them, reports the American Psychological Association (APA). It’s possible that a chronic illness will create physical or emotional challenges that make everyday life difficult. And financial challenges can arise if expensive medicines or treatments are needed.

All of this means that life with chronic illness can be tough. However, as many people learn, it is manageable.

Fighting back  The first step in dealing with a chronic illness is accepting it—and the fact that it deserves your attention. Failing to recognize the seriousness of a health condition may limit your ability to manage it, says the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Here are some ways to gain a sense of control:

Learn about your condition. People with a chronic illness report that knowing about their medical problem enables them to be more proactive about their health and to get better care for themselves. It may also help you make better decisions.

Partner with your doctor. He or she can provide you with helpful information and advice and address your concerns. Together, you can set goals and create a plan that will help you maximize your health.

Be positive. Try not to focus on what your illness has taken from you. Instead, concentrate on what you can do and the positive aspects of your life.

Stay connected. Family and friends can be an important source of support. Connecting with others who have lived your experience can be helpful too.

Do you think you might be depressed?  See our Lifestyle Checkup Tools at www.BlueKC.com. Click on “Living Healthy,” then on “Research a Health Topic with Interactive Tools,” then on “Are You Depressed?”

Share your feelings. It can help if you express your emotions, such as anger or sadness. But it’s also important to share your faith, hope and humor. Seek help if you experience depression. Left untreated, depression can affect your ability to cope.

Take care of yourself. Remember, even though you may be focused on your illness, following a healthy lifestyle that includes eating well and getting enough sleep and physical activity remains important, notes the APA.

Keep your routine. Whenever possible, maintain your normal work schedule, activity and hobbies. According to the APA, this can help give you a sense of stability.

Moving forward  There are bound to be times when you’ll feel discouraged, but keep trying to move forward. Life changes with chronic illness, but it goes on.

SUPPORT GROUPS

find strength AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN OTHERS

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A good ear and some warm words of encouragement can go a long way when you’re facing life’s challenges.

That’s why a support group can be helpful if you’ve been diagnosed with a chronic health condition that you do.

Support groups are made up of people who have the same condition that you do.

Because members of support groups have lived or are now living the experience that you are, they may know much about what you’re feeling and the emotions that you’re having. Spending time together allows you to share information and help each other along the way.

In some cases, what you learn at these groups may make it easier for you to make informed decisions. Some people report that the groups help them feel stronger as well.

Support groups may be led by trained professionals or by participants themselves. In addition to meeting in person, some groups meet online.

The give-and-take that occurs among members is a key benefit of support groups. But the groups may also offer other things, such as education and training to help people reduce stress or discover new ways to relax.

According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, studies have shown that support groups may reduce anxiety, lessen depression and improve participants’ ability to cope with their situations. And, in general, those who take part in support groups report having a better quality of life.

You can learn more about the many self-help groups that are available through the Self-Help Group Sourcebook Online. This is offered by the American Self-Help Group Clearinghouse. You’ll find it at www.mentalhelp.net/selfhelp.
IMMUNIZATIONS

**protect THE ONES YOU LOVE**

Some things you never outgrow. And that includes your need for vaccines. Vaccines are important at every stage of life—starting with infancy and continuing through adolescence and adulthood.

One reason vaccines are a lifelong must is that some don’t have staying power. The protection they provide from potentially life-threatening diseases decreases over time. That makes booster shots a necessity.

Some people may be unsure about vaccine safety or squeamish about shots. But keep in mind that dangerous diseases such as polio and diphtheria are now rare in the United States because of widespread vaccination here.

Even so, the germs that cause these diseases still exist. And they can infect anyone who isn’t protected by vaccines.

Be aware, too, that vaccines are usually very safe, reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Typical side effects—such as a low-grade fever—are minor and short-lived. What’s risky is catching a dangerous disease that could be avoided.

Check with your doctor to see if your family’s vaccines are up to date. In the meantime, here are key facts to remember about vaccines for every family member:

**Babies and young children.** Most vaccines are given during the first six years of life. This timetable is essential, as youngsters are especially at risk for diseases. Your child should have his or her first vaccine shortly after birth. This shot protects against hepatitis B, a disease that can seriously harm the liver.

At six months, your child should also have a yearly flu shot. Flu vaccines are especially important in children, as they can’t cough, which can result in pneumonia. By age seven, your child should also have a yearly flu shot for the first time.

By age seven, your child should be vaccinated against 14 diseases. These include hepatitis A (another disease that hurts the liver), diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, pneumonia, measles and chickenpox.

**Adolescents.** At 11 or 12, your child needs a special checkup—in part to receive vaccines. One key vaccine protects against meningitis, a potentially deadly infection of the fluid lining around the brain and spinal cord. Girls and boys of this age can also be vaccinated against the human papillomavirus, the major cause of cervical cancer and genital warts.

Ask about catch-up shots if your teen has missed any key vaccines.

**Adults.** This may surprise you: Up to 50,000 Americans each year die from vaccine-preventable diseases. Getting the vaccines you need can help keep you and those around you from getting sick. So talk to your doctor to be sure you’re protected.

A final tip: Keep a written record of vaccinations for each family member.

For the latest immunization recommendations, visit www.BlueKC.com. Click on “Living Healthy,” then on “View the 2013 Preventive Healthcare Guide.”

**RECOMMENDED immunization schedule**

**Vaccines children need**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Hib</th>
<th>HepA</th>
<th>HepB</th>
<th>IPV</th>
<th>MCV4</th>
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**Hib** = Haemophilus influenzae type b

**HepA** = hepatitis A

**HepB** = hepatitis B

**IPV** = poliovirus (polio)

**MCV4** = meningococcal

**MMR** = measles, mumps, rubella

**PEPV13** = pneumococcal

**PEPV23** = pneumococcal

**PV** = pertussis

**Tdap** = tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis

**VAR** = varicella (chickenpox)

**Range of routinely recommended ages**

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<thead>
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<th>Years</th>
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**Range for certain high-risk groups**

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**Range for catch-up immunizations**

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**HPV series**

**IPV series**

**MMR series**

**VAR series**

**HepA series**

**MCV4 series**

**MvfA series**

**PPSV23 series**

**DTaP series**

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When you’re planning the trip of a lifetime, booking airline tickets and making reservations are sure to top your to-do list. But it’s even more important to travel in good health. These tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other experts can help you have a healthy journey.

**Study up.** Log on and learn about any health risks at your destination and what precautions may be needed to stay safe or avoid illnesses that are common in that part of the world. Health information for specific regions can be found at www.cdc.gov/travel.

**Get needed vaccinations.** Several weeks before your trip, see your doctor to review your immunizations and find out if you need any additional travel vaccines or preventive medicines.

**Check in about chronic health problems.** A pretravel checkup is especially key if you have a chronic health condition, such as diabetes. It’s a chance to make sure you’re in good health and to get advice on managing your condition away from home.

For example, if you’ll be crossing time zones, how should you adjust your medications?

If you’re headed for a warm climate, how can you keep your insulin cool?

Always carry your member ID card when traveling.

Pack well. Bring extra prescription medicines in your carry-on luggage. Keep them in their original, labeled containers along with copies of your prescriptions. Also, you may want to wear a medical alert bracelet if you have allergies or other health issues.

Your doctor can offer advice on avoiding jet lag, altitude sickness, leg circulation problems and other travel concerns.
Beginning a balanced exercise program is often the toughest step toward being physically active. It’s also the most important step.

Plan for success The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons offers these tips for setting up a successful exercise program:

- Choose exercise activities that you enjoy and that work well year-round.
- Set a weekly exercise schedule that includes days off for rest.
- Give yourself plenty of time to warm up before starting and to cool down after you finish.
- You might have a little muscle soreness at first. But if the pain is severe, stop exercising and talk to your doctor.
- Don’t exercise too soon after a meal or in extreme heat.
- Wear comfortable shoes that provide good support.
- Work toward your goals gradually. Don’t overdo it.

It’s important to stick with your program. It takes time for your hard work to pay off.

A balanced program To get the best results from an exercise program, you’ll want to focus on three types of activities: aerobic conditioning, strength training and flexibility exercises. Each type of activity provides you with different and important health benefits.

Aerobic conditioning. Aerobic activities can improve the health of your heart and lungs. They also can help you manage your weight. During aerobic exercise, you move continuously to elevate your heart rate. The goal is to keep your heart rate at an increased rate for a certain period of time. How long you can take part in an aerobic activity depends on your physical condition.

Current guidelines recommend that kids get at least 60 minutes of exercise every day. It doesn’t have to be done all at one time. Small amounts can add up toward that goal.

How can parents help out? Here are a few ideas.

Let them play. Older kids may enjoy organized sports, such as baseball, karate and soccer. But for kids of any age, just plain fun counts too, such as jump rope, hopscotch and tug-of-war.

Give “moving” gifts. Instead of the latest video game, give your child a fun, active gift. Roller skates, a bike or a basketball are fun choices.

Make it a family thing. Get out and exercise together. Go to the park or for a hike. Bike or walk around the neighborhood. Play Frisbee in the yard.

You know all about the benefits of a regular exercise program. It’s good for your overall wellness and can help you avoid many health problems. But you’re just not sure how to get started.

Active, healthy kids have a good chance of growing into active, healthy adults.

Activity helps kids:
- Build stronger hearts, muscles and bones.
- Deal with stress.
- Have less anxiety and depression and better self-esteem.
- Reach or maintain a healthy weight.
- Have less chance of developing risk factors for future health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and osteoporosis.

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Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
your level of activity and take part in muscle-strengthening exercises, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

It’s best to spread out aerobic activity through the week. For example, you might schedule your aerobic workouts over three days a week. That way you can reduce the risk of injury and avoid getting too tired.

Strength training. This type of exercise is good for your muscles and bones. Stronger muscles and bones make it easier for you to do routine activities, like yard work or carrying groceries.

Muscle-strengthening activities make your muscles work harder than they are used to. Examples of strength-training exercises include lifting free weights, using a weight machine, working with resistance bands, doing calisthenics and carrying heavy loads. Situps, pushups and lunges are all strength exercises you can do without special equipment.

No specific amount of time is recommended for strength-training exercises. But HHS says they should be performed to the point where it would be difficult for you to do another repetition.

You should start out slowly with muscle-strengthening exercises and gradually increase them over time. At first, start out doing strength exercises one day a week. Then increase it to two or more days a week—depending on how you feel. Be sure to learn the proper technique for performing strength-training exercises.

Flexibility exercises. Flexibility is an important part of any exercise program. Stretching will help improve your ability to move. Proper stretching involves holding a mild stretch for 10 to 30 seconds while you breathe normally. Pick at least one stretch for each major muscle group. You should stretch your upper and lower back, chest, shoulders, arms, neck, thighs, hips, buttocks, and calves.

Time spent doing flexibility activities by themselves does not count toward meeting the aerobic or muscle-strengthening guidelines.

Talk to your doctor
Your body may take some time to adjust to any new type of physical activity. If you haven’t been active for a while, be sure to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

Your body needs to be replenished with plenty of fluids and foods that contain carbohydrates and proteins, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

A sports drink or an energy bar can help you recharge your body after a workout. But there are several other healthy options that can help you refuel. The academy offers these post-workout tips:

- Weigh yourself before and after a workout. For every pound you lose, drink three cups of fluid.
- Drinks containing carbohydrates, such as 100 percent fruit juice or sports drinks, are the best ways to replenish lost fluids. Water and watery foods like soup, watermelon and grapes are also good after a workout.
- Refuel your muscles with carbohydrates and proteins. Within the first few hours after your workout, eat carbohydrate-rich foods, such as pasta, rice or whole-grain cereal. Good sources of protein include low-fat milk, lean meat, fish or poultry.
- If you aren’t hungry right away, drink juice or sports drinks to get your carbohydrate dose.
- By taking care of your body after exercising, you can get a head start on preparing for your next workout.

What you eat and drink after working out is just as important as your pre-workout eating routine.

energy boosters: TIPS TO HELP YOU FEEL GOOD ALL DAY

If you have trouble making it through the workday, let alone finding the get-up-and-go to work out, a few simple lifestyle changes may give you the energy boost you need.

Here are some ideas from the American Council on Exercise:

- Manage stress better. Stress can sap your energy and make you feel sick. A relaxing walk in the park or even taking some deep breaths can help provide quick relief when you are stressed out.
- Stay active. Making physical activity a habit can give you more energy and make you feel better. Try to fit in at least 2½ hours of moderately intense exercise each week. It’s also a good idea to add two sessions of muscle-building activity to your weekly routine.
- Eat breakfast. Start out the day with a healthy meal. Oatmeal, fruit, whole-grain cereal or a light breakfast sandwich are all good choices.
- Avoid big meals. Smaller, more frequent meals can help you feel good throughout the day. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains in your diet.
- Get enough sleep. Lack of sleep can make it difficult to get through the day. Try to get at least seven or eight hours of sleep every night.
- Have some fun. Find time every day to take part in an activity that you enjoy. With a few lifestyle changes, you’ll feel better through the day and find the extra energy you need to get in a workout.

refuel AFTER A WORKOUT

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BANK ON IT: WHY KIDS NEED CALCIUM

Kids have an advantage over adults when it comes to bone health. They can still add calcium to their bone bank—an account that peaks in early adulthood.

Calcium is deposited and withdrawn from bones throughout life. The balance rises until people reach their late 20s, when bone mass peaks. After that, healthy lifestyle habits can help keep bones healthy, but the bone bank will diminish for the rest of your life.

That’s why it’s so important to have the strongest bones possible by early adulthood. And one way to do that is for kids to get plenty of calcium while they’re growing.

The best sources are dairy products, such as milk, yogurt and cheese. Certain vegetables also provide some calcium.

Kids under age two should only drink whole milk. After that, give them low-fat or nonfat dairy products—and follow these tips to help your kids get enough calcium:

- Replace sodas with milk-based fruit smoothies.
- Serve cereal with milk for breakfast, along with calcium-fortified orange juice.
- Add nonfat powdered milk to homemade cookies, muffins, soups or casseroles.
- Offer yogurt for snacks and as a dip for fruits and veggies.
- Serve high-calcium meals, such as cheese pizza, along with broccoli and a salad with dark, leafy greens.
- Add almonds to salads, casseroles or yogurt.

Older kids. The need for calcium is highest between ages nine and 18, when kids should get 1,300 milligrams of calcium per day. One eight-ounce glass of milk provides 300 milligrams of calcium, which is about one-fourth of the recommended intake for this age group.

For more information on bone health, talk to your doctor or visit www.BlueKC.com. Click on “Living Healthy,” then on “Research a Health Topic with Interactive Tools,” and then type “bones” in the search box.
Learning that you have type two diabetes can leave you feeling unsure about what comes next. You may feel sad, frustrated and cheated. You may even think that your body has betrayed you. But here’s an important thing to remember: You’re still in charge.

Just because your body has trouble processing glucose (sugar) doesn’t mean there’s nothing you can do to protect your health. In fact, there’s a lot you can do.

Start with these five steps:

1. Learn the facts It’s important to know how diabetes affects your body, advises the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP).

   Basically, the problem boils down to insulin, a natural hormone that helps turn glucose from food into energy.

   When the body doesn’t make or use insulin well, glucose stays in the blood, notes the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Ultimately, this can result in type two diabetes and put you at greater risk for: Heart disease and stroke. Eye problems and vision loss. Nerve damage and poor circulation, which can result in amputation of a foot or leg. Kidney failure. Gum disease and tooth loss.

   However, these problems aren’t inevitable. You can take action to help control your glucose levels. But it requires working with your doctor and making some changes in your habits.

2. Know your ABCs A key part of reducing diabetes complications is controlling these three factors: A1C. This test uses a number to show your average blood glucose level for the past three months. The goal for most people with diabetes is less than seven percent. Ask your doctor about the right goal for you.

   Blood pressure. The goal for most people is less than 130/80 mm Hg.

   Cholesterol. Low-density lipoprotein, the bad cholesterol, should be under 100 mg/dL of blood. High-density lipoprotein, the good cholesterol, should be over 40 for men and over 50 for women.

   Discuss your ABC goals with your doctor, and learn how to work toward achieving them, advises the NDEP.

3. Adjust your health habits How much you exercise and how you eat can each have a big impact on diabetes control, according to the NDEP. Try to:

   Eat right. You’ll want to cut back on fat and salt and eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and low- or nonfat dairy products. Your doctor or a dietitian can help you develop an eating plan that works for you.

   Stay active. Try to get 30 to 60 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Good activities include brisk walking, swimming, cycling, bowling, and active housework and yard work. Your doctor can recommend activities for you.

   Take your medicine. If your doctor prescribes diabetes pills or insulin shots, use them as directed. Your doctor also may prescribe a daily aspirin to help protect your heart.

Test your glucose and blood pressure. Follow your doctor’s directions on checking blood sugar and blood pressure at home. Keep a record of your results.

Check your feet. Nerve damage and poor circulation due to diabetes can result in dangerous infections of the feet. Check your feet daily for cuts, blisters, red spots and swelling. And tell your doctor about any sores that don’t go away.

Clean your teeth. Diabetes boosts your risk for gum disease. Be sure to brush and floss every day.

Kick the habit. Smoking increases your risk for diabetes-related health problems, such as heart disease and stroke. Your doctor can help you quit.

4. Get the checkups and screenings you need See your doctor at least twice yearly. This is a time to make sure your diabetes plan is working well.

   You should have your blood pressure, weight and feet checked at each visit, advises the NDEP. And you should have these tests yearly: Cholesterol and triglyceride screening. Complete foot exam. Dental exam. Dilated eye exam to check for vision problems. Urine and blood test to check for kidney problems.

   The NDEP also advises getting a flu shot every year and a pneumonia shot at least once during your lifetime.

5. Seek out emotional support You may want to consider joining a diabetes support group. Talking with others and sharing your feelings can help you learn to better cope with living with type two diabetes. Likewise, you can learn a wealth of information by listening to others who have the condition. Your doctor can help connect you to these groups.

   You can also find additional support online. Visit the online message boards of the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org.

Diabetes is part of the Blue KC Healthy Companion program. If you have diabetes and would like information or support, please call 816-395-2076 or toll-free 866-859-3813, or email HealthyCompanion@BlueKC.com.
Ah, those lazy, hazy days of summer. Think vacations. Think school breaks. It seems like a good time for the entire family to just chill and not do any heavy mental lifting.

As tempting as that may sound, however, maintaining good brain health is a year-round activity. Here are a few fun and easy ways to help keep everyone’s brain healthy this summer:

Get physical. Head outside with the kids for some hiking or biking—aerobic exercise gets the heart pumping. And that helps keep the brain fed with a healthy supply of blood and oxygen. It can even spur production of new brain cells, according to the Alzheimer’s Association. One large study linked fitness in midlife with a reduced risk for dementia in older age. Just make sure all bike riders wear a helmet—it helps protect the brain from trauma in case of an accident or fall.

Be a brainiac. Read a book while lounging at the beach. Break out word games for family game night. Forcing yourself to think can add new brain cells and solidify their connections.

Serve some food for thought. Summer is the perfect time to head to your local farmers market for foods high in brain-friendly antioxidants. Look for:
- Dark-colored vegetables, like kale, spinach, broccoli and beets.
- Berries—blue, black and red.
- Cherries and plums.
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Also, when firing up the grill, throw on some salmon, trout, mackerel or other fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, which are good for the brain.

And, finally, don’t forget that all-time favorite summer food—corn on the cob. It’s a brain pleaser too. Don’t slather it with butter, however. Eating too many foods high in cholesterol and saturated fat, like butter, may raise the risk for Alzheimer’s disease.

**Sharpen your No. 2 pencils, put on your warm-weather thinking cap and try your hand at a few true-or-false questions to test your SSQ—summer safety quotient:**

**T or F** A credit card can remove a bee stinger.
TRUE. Using tweezers can push more venom into the skin. Instead, flick the stinger out by scraping a credit card across it; then wash the area with soap and water. Apply ice or cold compresses to soothe the spot.

**T or F** DEET products are fine for everyone in the family.
FALSE. Most people can safely use insect repellents with DEET to avoid bites from mosquitoes and ticks that can carry diseases like West Nile, virus and Lyme disease—as well as other insects. But don’t use DEET products on babies under two months old. And repellents for older children shouldn’t contain more than 10 percent DEET, advises the American College of Emergency Physicians.

**T or F** You only need to apply sunscreen once a day.
FALSE. Liberally apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside, and then reapply every two hours. Choose a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.

**T or F** If fireworks don’t ignite the first time, try again.
FALSE. Never relight fireworks that are duds. Instead, douse or soak them in water before throwing away.

**T or F** Ticks transmit Lyme disease as soon as they bite.
FALSE. They actually need to be on the skin one to two days to transmit the bacterium that causes the disease. However, it’s still important to remove ticks right away. After spending time in infested areas, check yourself and other family members for ticks before bedtime.

For more tips to keep your family safe, visit www.BlueKC.com and click on “Research a Health Topic with Interactive Tools” and type “safety” in the search box.

Additional sources: American Red Cross; U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; U.S. Food and Drug Administration