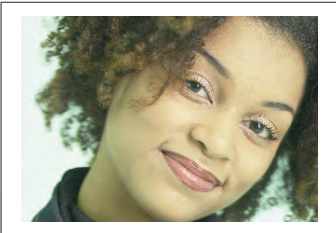




Dear Readers



GET SCREENED!

Healthy Start offers services for you when you are pregnant or between pregnancies, and for your baby from birth to age three. Services are free and are not based on income, educational background or ethnic makeup. Healthy Start services are based on a “screening”—a simple set of questions to determine if there are any risks that could affect your pregnancy and your baby’s growth or development.

Services include education and counseling in childbirth, breastfeeding, parenting, nutrition, smoking cessation, mental health and between-pregnancy care.

Find out if you qualify for Healthy Start services by saying “Yes” to a Healthy Start screening! Even if you do not wish to obtain any Healthy Start services, by completing the screenings you are helping ALL mothers and their babies in your community.

Understanding and Preventing Child Abuse

It’s hard to imagine that anyone would harm an infant or a child. Unfortunately, many infants and children in our society suffer abuse, often at the hands of their parents, stepparents or other caregiver. This issue of “Blossom” will focus on this subject by discussing what child abuse is, how to recognize signs of abuse in children, ways to help parents who are under stress and tips for parents to deal with the stresses of parenting. *It’s also good to know that Healthy Start offers free parenting education services and support for parents, as well as counseling to deal with stressors and promote well-being.*

What Is Child Abuse?

There are four major types of child abuse. *Neglect* is the failure to provide for a

child’s basic needs. *Physical abuse* is physical injury resulting from hitting, kicking, shaking, burning or otherwise physically harming a child. *Sexual abuse* is any situation in which a child is used for sexual pleasure. *Emotional abuse* is any pattern of behavior that damages a child’s emotional development or sense of self-worth, such as constant criticism, threats and rejection. Most often, the abuser is a parent, stepparent, relative, family friend or babysitter. Abuse happens in all socioeconomic, racial, ethnic and religious groups.

What Does Abuse Do to Children?

Abused children may suffer the effects throughout their entire lives. They often have feelings of guilt, violation, loss of

continued...



**Prevent
child abuse!**

Healthy Start

is a comprehensive program of maternal and child health services intended to improve pregnancy outcomes and help children get a healthy start in life.

Healthy Start accomplishes this through care coordination and support services that include education and counseling in childbirth, breastfeeding, parenting, nutrition, mental health counseling, smoking cessation and between-pregnancy care. Access to Healthy Start services is free to at-risk women, infants and children, and is not based upon income.

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Understanding and Preventing Child Abuse, cont.



control and low self-esteem. Emotional and behavioral problems are not uncommon. Studies show that having been abused as a child is a common factor among low achievers, runaways, drug abusers, prostitutes and prisoners. Even though an infant or child survives the actual abuse, the damage to future success and happiness can be severe.

How to Cope When Stress Arises:

- Take a deep breath and count to 10
- Phone a friend or family member
- Learn what to do when the baby cries and never shake the baby
- Hire a babysitter when you need a break
- Call the helpline (1-800-422-4453)



How to Tell if a Child May Be Suffering Abuse

- Changes behavior suddenly
- Is always watchful
- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
- Shrinks at approach of adults
- Lacks needed medical or dental care
- Is not clean
- Lacks appropriate clothing
- Shows extreme passivity or aggression

How to Tell if Someone May Be an Abuser

- Shows little concern for the child
- Demands perfection that the child cannot achieve
- Uses harsh physical discipline
- Belittles or berates the child constantly
- Rejects the child openly

Parenting Tips:

How to Strengthen Families

Nurturing and bonding with an infant is one of the most important things parents can do. Children thrive when they learn to trust that their parents will provide what they need: love, acceptance, positive guidance and protection. This close bond also helps parents to better communicate with their children. Nurturing and bonding are created when parents respond when their baby cries; touch and hold their baby; and smile, talk, read, sing and play games with their children.

SAY "YES" TO A HEALTHY START FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY!

Healthy Start services cover conception through maternal care for mothers, and for infancy-to-age-three children. In the early stages of your pregnancy, ask to be screened for Healthy Start services. After your baby is born, be sure to have your newborn screened for Healthy Start services at the hospital or birth center.

Understanding how children grow and develop helps parents relate to a child's normal, age-appropriate behaviors, which reduces anxiety and stress for the parent and leads to an enriching environment for the child.

Recognizing signs of stress and knowing what to do about it is very important for parents. Learning to handle feelings of anger and frustration in a positive way helps parents to avoid directing these feelings toward their children. It's also important that parents who are having difficulty dealing with feelings of anger or frustration seek out community resources such as counseling or support groups.

Forming social and support connections is a necessary part of providing parents with emotional support, encouragement and other assistance. Supportive adults in the family and community are a valuable resource for parents at all times but especially in times of need.



Knowing how to access needed resources, such as food, clothing, housing, transportation, healthcare and childcare can help to ensure the health and well-being of children and reduce stress on the parents.

Preventing Child Abuse

WORD SEEK PUZZLE

E R Z B P R X M Y G K S N B
 W S O B D Q M V N H U X O O
 R I U V P B B I D P G N I N
 E S U B A T R O P E R T T D
 E X E N A U H O E S Z G C I
 H Z U K T O R E Q J R R E N
 X S F R A T T B L L V V T G
 F E U J G H N C C P S K O H
 U N X R D E S L O D L H R V
 Y S O O G C E R Z X W I P Y
 E U M L F P A R E N T I N G
 P A E T N W R C V V H X G E
 Y C B C C H U A N X E U B
 T V N S S E R T S K W N O Z

- ABUSE
- BONDING
- HELP LINE
- NEGLECT
- NEVER SHAKE
- NURTURING
- PARENTING
- PROTECTION
- REPORT ABUSE
- STRESS
- SUPPORT GROUP

Where Can I Get More Information?

Prevent Child Abuse America
 Organization that builds awareness, provides education, helpful information and tips
www.preventchildabuse.org
 1-800-CHILDREN

Coalition for Children
 Website that provides information on all aspects of child abuse and other issues related to child safety
www.safechild.org

US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families
 Information and data as well as links to resources on child abuse and neglect
www.childwelfare.gov

Childhelp Hotline
 National 24-hour hotline for parents who need help or parenting advice
 1-800-422-4453

Circle of Parents
 National network of parents, state and regional organizations working to prevent child abuse and neglect, strengthen families, and promote parent leadership through self-help parent support groups and children's programs
www.circleofparents.org

National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
 Information, ideas and answers for parents and caregivers who are struggling to cope with a crying baby
www.dontshake.org



Events

Leesburg Baby Fair: An Event for First Time Parents
 Tuesday, March 24, 2009
 Leesburg Community Center, Venetian Gardens, 109 E. Dixie Avenue, Leesburg

The Mascotte Hispanic World's Greatest Baby Shower
 Tuesday, April 14, 2009
 Mascotte Community Center
 121 N. Sunset Ave., Mascotte

Citrus County World's Greatest Baby Shower
 Thursday, May 7, 2009
 3 PM until 5 PM, 6 PM until 8 PM (2 sessions)
 Citrus County Auditorium on US 41 South



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If you would like a presentation or more information regarding Healthy Start, please contact your local Community Liaison:

Dawn Easter
Citrus or Hernando
(239) 494-7553

Betsy Harrington
Lake or Sumter
(352) 409-6057



Understanding and recognizing child abuse is the first step towards making sure that infants and children are protected from harm.

How Can I Help?

There are a number of things we all can do to address the problem of child abuse. *If you have a relative, friend or neighbor who has children, offer to take care of them* on occasion so that the parents can enjoy time away and take a break from parenting. Parenting can be stressful, and everyone needs a break now and then. *Get involved* by working with the community to develop needed services and information for parents. *Help develop parenting resources* at your local library. *Volunteer* at a local child abuse prevention program. *Report suspected child abuse or neglect* to the local department of children and family services or the police department.

When parents are stressed, it helps to remember:

- No parent is perfect
- Help is as close as a neighbor or friend
- Parenting is challenging
- There are many community resources

Helpful Websites...

Childcare: www.dcf.state.fl.us/childcare
Florida Kidcare: www.floridakidcare.org
Voluntary PreK: www.upkfl.org
Pregnancy.org: www.pregnancy.org
Womenshealth.gov: www.4women.gov/pregnancy
Food Stamps: www.myflorida.com/accessflorida
Central Healthy Start: www.centralhealthystart.org
WellFlorida Council: www.wellflorida.org
1-352-313-6500

and Phone Numbers

Florida Family Health Line
1-800-451-BABY

Poison Control
1-800-222-1222

Abuse Hotline
1-800-4-A-CHILD

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233

National Crisis Line
1-866-334-4357

Did You Know?

In 2006, 905,000 children in the United States were abused or neglected. Parents (birth parents, adoptive parents, and step-parents) accounted for 80% of these cases.—National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System