

Back to School CWA Newsletter #4

Slow Down: Back to School Means Sharing the Road



- School days bring congestion: Yellow school buses are picking up their charges, kids on bikes are hurrying to get to school before the bell rings, harried parents are trying to drop their kids off before work.
- It's never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when kids are present – especially before and after school.

If You're Dropping Off

Schools often have very specific drop-off procedures for the school year. Make sure you know them for the safety of all kids. More children are hit by cars near schools than at any other location, according to the National Safe Routes to School program. The following apply to all school zones:

- Don't double park; it blocks visibility for other children and vehicles

- Don't load or unload children across the street from the school
- Carpool to reduce the number of vehicles at the school

Sharing the Road with Young Pedestrians

According to research by the National Safety Council, most of the children who lose their lives in bus-related incidents are 4 to 7 years old, and they're walking. They are hit by the bus, or by a motorist illegally passing a stopped bus. A few precautions go a long way toward keeping children safe:

- Don't block the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or waiting to make a turn, forcing pedestrians to go around you; this could put them in the path of moving traffic
- In a school zone when flashers are blinking, stop and yield to pedestrians crossing the crosswalk or intersection
- Always stop for a school patrol officer or crossing guard holding up a stop sign
- Take extra care to look out for children in school zones, near playgrounds and parks, and in all residential areas
- Don't honk or rev your engine to scare a pedestrian, even if you have the right of way
- Never pass a vehicle stopped for pedestrians
- Always use extreme caution to avoid striking pedestrians wherever they may be, no matter who has the right of way

Sharing the Road with School Buses

If you're driving behind a bus, allow a greater following distance than if you were driving behind a car. It will give you more time to stop once the yellow lights start flashing. It is illegal in all 50 states to pass a school bus that is stopped to load or unload children.

- Never pass a bus from behind – or from either direction if you're on an undivided road – if it is stopped to load or unload children
- If the yellow or red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, traffic must stop
- The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children; stop far enough back to allow them space to safely enter and exit the bus
- Be alert; children often are unpredictable, and they tend to ignore hazards and take risks

Sharing the Road with Bicyclists

On most roads, bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as vehicles, but bikes can be hard to see. Children riding bikes create special problems for drivers

because usually they are not able to properly determine traffic conditions. The most common cause of collision is a driver turning left in front of a bicyclist.

- When passing a bicyclist, proceed in the same direction slowly, and leave 3 feet between your car and the cyclist
- When turning left and a bicyclist is approaching in the opposite direction, wait for the rider to pass
- If you're turning right and a bicyclist is approaching from behind on the right, let the rider go through the intersection first, and always use your turn signals
- Watch for bike riders turning in front of you without looking or signaling; children especially have a tendency to do this
- Be extra vigilant in school zones and residential neighborhoods
- Watch for bikes coming from driveways or behind parked cars
- Check side mirrors before opening your door

By exercising a little extra care and caution, drivers and pedestrians can co-exist safely in school zones.



Truancy Corner:

Los Banos Unified School District would like to welcome aboard our new county truancy officer, Andrea Valtierra-Gongora. Collaboration with the other numerous county schools, MCOE, and the County District Attorney office made this happen. Welcome to LBUSD!

The Link Between Truancy, Dropouts, and Delinquency (Always good to look at data)

“Truancy is highly correlated with low levels of school achievement and with high drop-out rates.” In addition, students who drop out of school may be more likely to end up in prison, and high school dropouts are three and a half times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested, and more than eight times more likely to be in jail or prison. Sixty-eight percent of state prison inmates do not have a high school diploma.³

Unfortunately, those statistics are not surprising. Truancy is often a “gateway” to juvenile delinquency and a lifetime of crime.⁴

Various studies illustrate this disturbing trend, for example:

- A 1979 study of adult recidivists showed that 78 percent of inmates had truancy as the first entry on their arrest records.⁵
- As part of a study titled “Court Careers of Juvenile Offenders,” researchers reviewed the court records of nearly 70,000 juvenile offenders and found that for the purpose of predicting future criminality, the most likely juvenile recidivists were those whose first referrals involved truancy, burglary, motor vehicle theft, or robbery.⁶
- According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), approximately 57 percent of violent crimes are committed by juveniles while they are truant.⁷
- A 1996 study by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice shows that more than 71 percent of 13- to 16-year-olds prosecuted for criminal violations in Miami, Florida, had been truant; in San Diego, 44 percent of violent juvenile crime occurred between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.⁸

Exercise Corner

5 of the best exercises you can ever do

Special Health Report from Harvard Medical School.



If you're not an athlete or serious exerciser — and you just want to work out for your health or to fit in your clothes better — the gym scene can be intimidating. Just having to walk by treadmills, stationary bikes, and weight machines can be enough to make you head straight back home to the couch.

Yet some of the best physical activities for your body don't require the gym or ask you to get fit enough to run a marathon. These "workouts" can do wonders for your health. They'll help keep your weight under control, improve your balance and range of motion, strengthen your bones, protect your joints, prevent bladder control problems, and even ward off memory loss.

No matter your age or fitness level, these activities can help you get in shape and lower your risk for disease:

1. Swimming

You might call swimming the perfect workout. The buoyancy of the water supports your body and takes the strain off painful joints so you can move them more fluidly.

"Swimming is good for individuals with arthritis because it's less weight-bearing," explains Dr. I-Min Lee, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Research has found that swimming can also improve your mental state and put you in a better mood. Water aerobics is another option. These classes help you burn calories and tone up.

2. Tai chi

This Chinese martial art that combines movement and relaxation is good for both body and mind. In fact, it's been called "meditation in motion." Tai chi is made up of a series of graceful movements, one transitioning smoothly into the next. Because the classes are offered at various levels, tai chi is accessible — and valuable — for people of all ages and fitness levels. "It's particularly good for older people because balance is an important component of fitness, and balance is something we lose as we get older," Dr. Lee says.

Take a class to help you get started and learn the proper form. You can find tai chi programs at your local YMCA, health club, community center, or senior center.

3. Strength training

If you believe that strength training is a macho, brawny activity, think again. Lifting light weights won't bulk up your muscles, but it will keep them strong. "If you don't use muscles, they will lose their strength over time," Dr. Lee says.

Muscle also helps burn calories. "The more muscle you have, the more calories you burn, so it's easier to maintain your weight," says Dr. Lee. Similar to other exercise, strength training may also help preserve brain function in later years.

Before starting a weight training program, be sure to learn the proper form. Start light, with just one or two pounds. You should be able to lift the weights 10 times with ease. After a couple of weeks, increase that by a pound or two. If you can easily lift the weights through the entire range of motion more than 12 times, move up to slightly heavier weight.

4. Walking

Walking is simple, yet powerful. It can help you stay trim, improve cholesterol levels, strengthen bones, keep blood pressure in check, lift your mood, and lower your risk for a number of diseases (diabetes and heart disease, for example). A number of studies

have shown that walking and other physical activities can even improve memory and resist age-related memory loss.

All you need is a well-fitting and supportive pair of shoes. Start with walking for about 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Over time, you can start to walk farther and faster, until you're walking for 30 to 60 minutes on most days of the week.

5. Kegel exercises

These exercises won't help you look better, but they do something just as important — strengthen the pelvic floor muscles that support the bladder. Strong pelvic floor muscles can go a long way toward preventing incontinence. While many women are familiar with Kegels, these exercises can benefit men too.

To do a Kegel exercise correctly, squeeze the muscles you would use to prevent yourself from passing urine or gas. Hold the contraction for two or three seconds, then release. Make sure to completely relax your pelvic floor muscles after the contraction. Repeat 10 times. Try to do four to five sets a day.

Many of the things we do for fun (and work) count as exercise. Raking the yard counts as physical activity. So does ballroom dancing and playing with your kids or grandkids. As long as you're doing some form of aerobic exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, and you include two days of strength training a week, you can consider yourself an "active" person.

Be healthy, safe and careful this school year!

Resources That May Help YOU!

Community Resources

Merced County RAFT (recovery assistance for teens): 209-381-6860
Merced County Alateen: 209-524-3907
Merced Alcohol and Drug Abuse: 209-827-2185
Merced County Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs: 209-381-6800 or 710-6100
Westside Family Service Center: 209-710-6250
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 209-826-8502
Life Arrow-Clovis, CA 559-348-0126
New Hope Recovery: Modesto 209-527-2046
California Department of Alcohol & Drug Programs Resource Center:
1-800-879-2772

Aspirant- Merced – 209-725-2125
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children- 1-800-843-5678
California Smoker' Helpline- 1-800-NO- BUTTS (1-800-662-8887)
1-800-844-CHEW (1-800-844-2439)

Mental Health Services

Livingston Clinic: 394-4032
Los Banos Clinic: 710-6100
Merced Adult Clinic: 381-6800
Merced Youth Clinic: 381-6830
Marie Green Psychiatric Center- 381-6879
Wellness Center Merced- 381-6874
Toll- Free at all locations: 1-888-334-0163
After hours- 381-6800 or toll free 1-888-334-0163
Alcohol and Drug Services- 381-6809
A Women's Place- CONFIDENTIAL #- 722-4357
Merced Business office- 725-7900
Los Banos Office- 827-5990
National Domestic Violence Hotline- 1-800-799-SAFE
National Sexual Assault Hotline- 1800-654- HOPE

Local Resources

Emergency - 911
A Woman's Place - 722-4357
Atwater Police Department - 357-6396
Dos Palos Police Department - 392-2177
Family support division - 381-1300
Gustine Police Department - 854-1010
Livingston Police Department - 394-7916
Los Banos Police Department - 827-7070
Merced Police Department - 385-6912
Merced County Sheriff's Dept - 385-7444