

HEALTH

HEALTH WATCH

Hospice Volunteer Training -- Providence offers a free comprehensive course of training to prepare people who are interested in becoming hospice volunteers. No previous experience is required. For more information or to request an application packet, call Melinda Smith, hospice volunteer coordinator, at 503-215-5774.

Walk to Defeat ALS -- A 3-mile non-competitive walk to defeat ALS, offered referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease, will be held Sunday, Sept. 14 beginning at 11 a.m. at the East Bank Esplanade on the Willamette River. For more information, visit walkor.else.org or call 1-800-681-9851.

Managing Chronic Pain -- Providence Health and Services offers advice on how to treat pain and reclaim your life during panel discussions with experts, on Thursday, Sept. 4; Thursday, Sept. 11 or Monday, Sept. 15. The evening lectures are free, but registration is requested. Visit providence.org/class or call 503-574-6595.

Bereavement Support Groups -- Free, safe confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, call 503-215-4622.

Mammography Screening -- Early detection is a key factor in the prevention of breast cancer. Call 503-251-6137 to schedule your high-tech, soft-touch mammogram.

Leg Alert Screening -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

Managing Chronic Hepatitis C -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m., the informative session led by a registered nurse to help manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctors referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Free Body Basics -- This physician recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

Heart Talk Support Group meets -- on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Maternity Water Workout -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength, and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for more information.

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercise Classes -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Osteoporosis Screening -- An ultrasound bone density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

Stroke Alert Screening -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

Radiation Approved for Leafy Greens

To kill E. coli, other germs

The government has decided to allow food producers to start zapping fresh spinach and iceberg lettuce with just enough radiation to kill E. coli and other dangerous germs, a key safety move amid increasing outbreaks from raw produce.

Irradiated meat has been around for years, particularly ground beef that is a favorite hiding spot for E. coli. Spices also can be irradiated.

But there had long been concern that zapping leafy greens with X-rays or other means of radiation would leave them limp. Not so with today's modern techniques.

The Food and Drug Administration determined that irradiation indeed can kill food-poisoning germs and even lengthen the greens' shelf life without compromising the safety or nutrient value of raw spinach and lettuce.



The grocery industry will be allowed to zap leafy greens with radiation to kill E-coli and other germs.

The new regulation went into effect last Friday.

The Grocery Manufacturers Association had originally petitioned the FDA seeking to expand use of irradiation to many more types of produce several years ago. But in wake of the 2006 E. coli outbreak from spinach —

which killed three people and sickened nearly 200 — plus a list of lettuce recalls, the industry group asked the FDA to rule on the leafy greens first.

The FDA still is considering what other types of produce might be OK to irradiate. Often mentioned as possible are tomatoes

and peppers, which have been the focus of investigators trying to trace this summer's nationwide salmonella outbreak.

E. coli is fairly sensitive to radiation, but salmonella can require more energy. While it's not sterilization, the FDA ruled that food companies could use a dose proven to dramatically reduce levels of E. coli, salmonella and listeria on raw spinach and lettuce — a dose somewhat lower than meat requires.

The most likely use would be in bagged greens: The entire sealed bag can go under the beam, taking away the risk of recontamination later.

Planning on irradiation isn't an excuse for dirty produce in the first place, the government warned. Growers and processors still must follow standard agricultural and manufacturing processes designed to keep the greens as clean as possible. Consumers, also, should wash the leaves just like they do today.

For Your Health

BY LARRY LUCAS

Getting children ready for the classroom means trips to the store armed with back-to-school shopping lists for things like crayons, erasers and notepads. But another back-to-school ritual shouldn't be overlooked: call your pediatrician to find out if your child has the immunizations he or she needs to enter school or daycare.

Immunizations play a critical role in protecting your child's health. Most vaccines work by tricking the immune system into thinking that a real infection is taking place, even though it is not. Then when the person is exposed to that illness again, the immune system is already activated and ready to fend it off. That way, your child won't get sick and it will help prevent the spread of disease to other children.

Vaccines have contributed to a significant reduction in many childhood diseases, such as polio, measles and whooping cough. Many of these conditions now sound like relics of a bygone era

and we're lucky.

A child born today can expect to live 30 years longer than a child born a century ago. Today, it is rare for American children to experience the devastating effects of these illnesses. But vaccines are still an important and necessary part of protecting the health of your child. Why? We live in an increasingly global society; the germs that cause vaccine-preventable diseases and death still exist and can be passed on to people who are unprotected against them.

Like any medicine, vaccination has benefits and risks, and no vaccine is 100 percent effective in preventing disease. But the fact is that a child is far more likely to be seriously injured by one of these diseases than by any vaccine.

Most side effects of vaccines are usually minor and short-lived. A child may feel soreness at the injection site or experience a low-grade fever. Serious



Back to School Vaccines

vaccine reactions are extremely rare.

America's pharmaceutical research companies are making tremendous strides in developing and discovering vaccines and other medicines to treat a host of conditions that impact our children.

There is now a vaccine routinely recommended for 11- and 12-year-old girls that protects against four types of genital human papillomavirus (HPV), which together cause 70 percent of cervical cancers.

And, the Centers for Disease Control recently reported that a new vaccine against rotavirus — a condition that causes severe vomiting and diarrhea among infants and young children, resulting in tens of thousands of hospitalizations every year — is making a significant impact, leading to the lowest incidence rate since the CDC began monitoring it 15 years ago.

Even more hope is on the horizon. Biopharmaceutical re-

searchers are testing more than 200 medicines, including 23 vaccines, to treat the special health needs of kids.

Back-to-school time can be hectic for families — sometimes it's hard enough to remember to pack your child's lunch for the day, let alone keeping track of all the immunizations they need throughout their childhood. But it's worth the effort and required by law in some states.

Call your pediatrician or school's administration office to find out what vaccinations your child might need. You can also visit the CDC's Web site at cdc.gov for an up-to-date schedule of immunizations for children of various ages. If your child or adolescent has missed any shots, check with your doctor about getting back on track. It just might save the life of your child or someone else's.

Larry Lucas is a vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

Easy on the Backpacks


Backpacks are as much a necessity for school as the books they hold. And with the various

books, supplies, and, of course, lunch, these backpacks can get awfully heavy.

To avoid back pain, choose a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back. Make sure your child always uses both straps — slinging a backpack over one shoulder

can strain muscles and may also increase curvature of the spine.

Providence Rehabilitation Services recommends that a backpack weigh no more than 15 percent of the child's weight.



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