Rx for Reading

Little brains grow fast, and books help them grow healthy.

In fact, 90% of brain development occurs between birth and age 5. Reading together in those first five years actually improves brain function.

A recent MRI study of 3- to 5-year-olds looked at the relationship between shared parent-child reading and brain activity. Children went through an MRI scan while listening to stories. The scans showed that frequent reading and a variety of books sparks more activity in the left side areas of the brain that process words and form meaning.*

The way parents and kids read together affects the brain, too.

That’s the idea behind 1-2-3…Read with Me!, a new early literacy program that debuts at Northfield Clinic and will roll out across the community.

1-2-3…Read with Me! encourages parents to read a book three times, in three different ways, to help their child learn to read and understand (see chart at right).

Pediatricians Ben Flannery, MD and Todd Amunrud, DO promote shared reading to the families they see in Northfield Clinic. They explain:

• Why reading is important for brain health
• How early reading stimulates the brain of infants and toddlers
• How to read in the best way to benefit your child’s growing brain

“As a pediatrician and a dad, I think reading together this way is very valuable,” Dr. Flannery says. “I’m doing it at home, and encouraging patients’ parents to do it too.”

Every child who visits Northfield Clinic for a preschool exam gets a free book, with a sticker for parents on how to read together.

1-2-3…Read with Me! is led by Northfield Promise, a collaborative program designed to help all youth in Northfield reach their full potential, with support from community partners: Friends of the Northfield Public Library; Northfield Public Schools; Northfield Early Childhood Initiative Coalition; Healthy Community Initiative; Northfield Shares; Northfield Area United Way; Northfield Hospital & Clinics; and Rotary Club of Northfield.

To learn more about the brain benefits of reading, make an appointment with Dr. Ben Flannery or Dr. Todd Amunrud at Northfield Clinic: 507-646-1494.

*Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

“I THINK READING TOGETHER THIS WAY IS VERY VALUABLE. I’M DOING IT AT HOME, AND ENCOURAGING PATIENTS’ PARENTS TO DO IT TOO.”

– DR. BEN FLANNERY
How (and why) to keep your medication straight

By Tricia Hagedorn

Record-keeping is good for your health. It’s important to keep an up-to-date and accurate list of all your medications – prescription and over the counter.

That’s because the medications you’re taking are an important part of your overall health, and all your care providers need accurate details. Plus, your doctor might change your medications or dosages at any appointment. When your doctor adjusts your medication, the medical record kept by that provider is updated. But many electronic medical records don’t “talk” to each other, so one of your doctors may not have access to the list of medications that another one of your doctors has prescribed.

You can contribute to your own health by bringing an up-to-date list of your medications to every provider visit. That includes your primary care provider and specialists such as the cardiologist or orthopaedic surgeon, and even visits to Urgent Care or the Emergency Room.

Your medication list should include the name, dosage, route (such as oral, injected, topical), frequency, and why it’s taken (the “indication”) for every medication you’re taking. List all prescription and over-the-counter medications, plus herbs, vitamins and supplements.

- **Create** a medication list in the way that works best for you. Use a handwritten or typed list, a printout from your electronic medical record, or a phone app that tracks medications (check out MedCoach or MediSafe for examples).
- **Update** your medication list every time there’s a change in type or dose of medication. Review your list at least monthly, and before every appointment.
- **Share** your medication list with anyone who helps you with your medication.
- **Carry** your medication list with you. It can be especially helpful during an emergency, or when you are admitted to the hospital.

Filling your medications at one pharmacy can help provide accurate medication interaction checking, track medication changes, monitor compliance, and assist with overall medication safety.

Medication regimens can be very complex, and many medications can sound or look like something else. Pharmacists keep a keen eye on “sound-alike” and “look-alike” names to prevent errors.

**When you’re hospitalized**

Each time a patient is admitted to Northfield Hospital, a hospital staff pharmacist interviews the patient, family, and/or healthcare facility to create a medication list for the patient. Then the pharmacist performs a “medication reconciliation,” comparing this medication list with the patient’s existing medical record. The pharmacist reviews many details to make sure each medication is appropriate for the patient.

Medication reconciliation should occur at every point during the transition of care – at a clinic visit, admission to the hospital, transfer to another hospital, and at discharge back home or to a skilled nursing facility.

If you have questions about your medications, you can consult with a pharmacist.

Tricia Hagedorn, Pharm.D, BCOP, is a pharmacist at Northfield Hospital.
**Mayo oncologist joins Cancer Care & Infusion Center**

Dr. Sarah Kratz takes a personal approach to treating cancer – right down to the cellular level. “So much progress is being made in treatment that’s much more directed to cancer cells with much less collateral damage,” says Dr. Kratz. “Our ability to personalize care by analyzing the actual cancer cells and treatments that might affect them has made it possible to highly personalize the treatment for each individual patient.”

Dr. Kratz joins Northfield Hospital & Clinics through a partnership with the Mayo Clinic. She sees patients at the Cancer Care & Infusion Center at Northfield Hospital. With over 30 years of experience, her expertise in oncology and hematology is a welcome addition to locally based care. Dr. Kratz has a special interest in lung cancer, breast cancer, and cancers of the head and neck.

Above all, her interest is treating the whole patient. “I believe in personalizing care,” Dr. Kratz says. “It’s very important to figure out what the patient really needs and wants – what their goals are, especially for quality of life.”

Dr. Kratz works with patients and their families to make treatment decisions. “Patients have said I really take care of the whole person and not just the cancer problem they’re having,” she adds.

Dr. Kratz earned her medical degree from the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, with residencies and fellowships at Duke University in Internal Medicine, Medical Oncology/Hematology and Radiation Oncology. She is board certified in Medical Oncology and Internal Medicine.

To make an appointment with Dr. Kratz, call the Cancer Care & Infusion Center at 507-646-6979.

**Northfield and Lonsdale welcome new physician**

Dr. Jack Felland likes variety. As a family medicine physician, Dr. Felland cares for patients of all ages for a wide range of conditions. He treats everything from routine care to complex, multi-problem health issues.

“I like seeing whole families,” he says. “I like to see everything, really.”

Dr. Felland sees patients in Northfield (including evening hours) and in Lonsdale. He enjoys getting to know patients, and providing strong continuity of care.

“The doctor-patient relationship is very important to me,” Dr. Felland explains. “It’s why I went into family medicine – getting to know a patient over time, being able to anticipate their needs. That was the romance of medicine for me: To have that role in people’s lives.”

Dr. Felland takes a holistic view of each patient to be able to tailor care to what each patient needs. “I encourage a healthy, active lifestyle in my patients while treating underlying causes of symptoms when possible,” he says.

Dr. Felland earned his medical degree from the University of Minnesota, and completed his residency at the Mayo School of Graduate Medicine in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He has special interest in disease prevention and health maintenance, joint injections, minor skin surgeries, and fracture care.

“There’s a lot of art to medicine, and it’s good to have a variety of options to offer patients,” including holistic approaches, he says.

Dr. Felland comes to NH&C from Mayo Clinic in Owatonna, where he practiced for 16 years. He grew up on a dairy farm in Mora, near Hinckley. Dr. Felland and his wife Katie and their three children live in Northfield. He enjoys being with family, travel, reading, sports, listening to music and spending time at the lake.

To make an appointment with Dr. Felland, call 507-646-1494.
John Christianson was pretty attached to his beard – until his dermatologist asked him to shave it. It may have saved his life.

John had no history of skin cancer when he saw Dr. Amer Kalaaji to check a lesion on his forehead. Dr. Kalaaji did a biopsy – and noticed another, more suspicious spot on John's cheek, under his thick full beard. He asked John to shave his beard, and come back for a more thorough exam and a full body skin check.

“I didn’t shave the whole thing. Just the area where the spot was, and then the other side to balance it,” John says.

It was enough.

Dr. Kalaaji performed a punch biopsy that showed melanoma, a fast-growing and deadly skin cancer. (The spot on John's forehead was benign.)

“When I first heard the word ‘melanoma,’ I didn’t get panicky but I did get a little sad,” John recalls. “It sounded like it was the last page. But it wasn’t.”

Melanoma can be fatal.

“Catching melanoma early is critical to a good prognosis,” Dr. Kalaaji says. “If it’s caught early, it can be treated surgically without requiring other therapy.”

Dr. Kalaaji referred John to Mayo Clinic in Rochester; he had surgery three days later. “It was reassuring to get it done so quickly,” John says.

Dr. Kalaaji is a Mayo physician who sees patients in Northfield Hospital & Clinics’ Lakeville Clinic through a partnership between NH&CC and Mayo. That partnership ensures quick, complete specialty care for NH&CC patients.

“As a Mayo employee for 16 years, I know that most conditions can be treated in the clinic, in Lakeville, and I recognize which cases need more specialized care at Mayo,” Dr. Kalaaji explains. “That helps expedite referrals.”

John had Mohs surgery, a precise technique in which thin layers of cancer-containing skin are progressively removed and examined until only cancer-free tissue remains. The goal is to remove as much of the skin cancer as possible, while doing minimal damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

The cancer was caught early enough that John didn’t need additional treatment.

“Because John was willing to shave, we were able to catch it early,” Dr. Kalaaji says. “It could have hidden in his beard for years and could have spread to lymph nodes and organs.”

Skin cancers can grow quickly. Everyone should perform a monthly self-exam of their skin. Any new lesion, plus any changing moles or lesions, should be evaluated by a dermatologist. Dr. Kalaaji recommends a full head-to-toe skin cancer screening once a year for everyone. Also see a dermatologist for rashes, dermatitis, acne, eczema or hives.

“Dr. Kalaaji is terrific,” John says. “He has a friendly, calm manner and is very efficient. His assistants are very helpful. They make a good team.”

A retired minister, John and his wife Norma live on 18 acres near Lakeville, with wooded paths and meadows. John does a lot of mowing.

“I’m outdoors a lot. I wear a straw hat,” John says. “I need to develop the habit of wearing sunscreen. But at 78,
new habits are hard to develop.”

His advice? “I’m sure most people who have a harmless-looking mark like mine would tend to think it’s not serious. Let someone with know-how – the dermatologist – decide that.”

John will get a full-body check every three months “to make sure I don’t have a repeat performance,” he says. “I’m not sure if I’ll have to shave or not.”

In the meantime, he’ll be wearing his hat.

**NH&C goes tobacco-free**

All Northfield Hospital & Clinics facilities are completely tobacco-free as of August 1, 2016.

This provides a healthier environment for patients, visitors, employees and volunteers.

Tobacco is no longer allowed anywhere on our premises, even in cars. All buildings, grounds, parking lots, NH&C vehicles and private vehicles on NH&C property are tobacco-free at all times.

If you’re going to be hospitalized, talk with your doctor about quitting tobacco and other alternatives.

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### Memory Café opens at Northfield Senior Center

People with dementia and their care partners can feel isolated. Older adults who feel lonely or isolated are more likely to have poor physical or mental health. Plus, research shows that feelings of loneliness contribute to cognitive decline, accelerating the pace of dementia.

The Northfield Senior Center has opened a Memory Café, inviting people with memory loss and their care companions to come together to make new friendships and support one another. In a Café setting, guests gather for coffee and refreshments, a “topic of the day” and occasional speakers, group exercises and activities like putting a puzzle together.

The Memory Café gives people with early stages of dementia and their care partners an opportunity for social engagement and peer support in a respectful, understanding environment without the pressures and stigma that may exist in more general community settings.

The Memory Café is held on the third Wednesday of each month, from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm at the Northfield Senior Center, 1651 Jefferson Parkway in Northfield. No registration is required. The Memory Café is free, and open to all community members. To learn more, call Lynne Pederson at (507) 664-3701 or visit northfieldseniorcenter.org.

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**Don’t Forget to Wear a Helmet!**

Helmets can be purchased for only $10 from two locations:

**Northfield EMS**
Northfield Ambulance Garage
1600 Riverview Lane
Call to arrange to pick up a helmet
507-646-1414

**Northfield Public Schools Community Services Division**
Northfield Community Resource Center
1651 Jefferson Parkway
Open Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm

**Northfield EMS**
Northfield Ambulance Garage
1600 Riverview Lane
Call to arrange to pick up a helmet
507-646-1414
Madeline Nelson tears it up on the field

Madeline Nelson is a three-sport athlete. So when her knee popped during a section finals lacrosse game, there was more at stake than the score.

Lakeville South High School needed one more win to go to state. An opponent faked left; as Madeline followed, she twisted her knee, heard a pop, and fell. The next morning, her primary care doctor suggested seeing an orthopaedic surgeon. A close family friend recommended Dr. Hans Bengtson, an orthopedic surgeon with Northfield Hospital & Clinics and an experienced athlete himself. “She said, ‘If you were my own child, I’d take you to Dr. Bengtson,’” Madeline recalls.

Dr. Bengtson suspected a tear of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), one of the most common knee injuries for athletes. He ordered an MRI at Northfield Hospital, then reviewed the results with Madeline and her dad, Tony.

Madeline’s family knew the drill. Her older sister Taylor tore the ACL in both her knees in high school, and Tony tore one playing soccer in recent years.

They found an empathetic expert in Dr. Bengtson, who had knee surgery for a sports injury when he was around Madeline’s age. Dr. Bengtson is board-certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery and is eligible for a Certificate of Added Qualification in Sports Medicine.

“We got along really well,” Madeline says. “I was very confident with him.”

The MRI showed an ACL tear plus a tear in the meniscus, flexible cartilage that cushions the knee. Surgery would repair both. While operating, Dr. Bengtson discovered two more tears to Madeline’s meniscus, and repaired those, as well.

Madeline went home that night, and started physical therapy the next day. Therapist Lori Lubow at Center for Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation in Lakeville monitored healing of the surgical site, helped manage Madeline’s pain, and got her moving again and rebuilding muscle.

“Lori was with me the whole way,” Madeline says. “She made me feel so welcomed and confident.”

“I was slowly getting better and better; it was really exciting to see,” Madeline recalls. “But I was getting frustrated with myself because I couldn’t even lift my leg. I was trying so hard to get my quad muscle to fire, and it just wouldn’t fire. I felt like I had a lot to make up for, to recover that muscle.”

Madeline missed summer and fall soccer, and the first half of hockey season – frustrating for an athlete whose motto (and nickname) is “I Can Play.”
Athletes at risk for knee injury

If you’re tearing up the field, you’re at a higher risk of tearing up your knees.

Athletes whose sports involve cutting (quick change of direction), pivoting and twisting are more vulnerable to injury. That includes sports like soccer, lacrosse, basketball or downhill skiing.

One of the most common knee injuries is a tear in the meniscus, a piece of soft, rubbery cartilage that cushions the knee, keeps it stable, and acts as a shock absorber. (There are two menisci in each of your knees.)

Another common knee injury is a sprain or tear of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), one of four main ligaments that connect the thighbone to the shinbone like strong ropes that hold the bones together and keep the knee stable.

Dr. Bengtson knows how it feels. During football practice in eighth grade, an ACL-type injury sidelined him. It was the end of football for the year, but the beginning of his career as an orthopaedic surgeon.

Most ACL injuries involve a complete tear of the ligament, Dr. Bengtson says. “It can’t heal spontaneously or predictably with repair – stitching the two ends together. Instead, it has to be reconstructed using other tissue.” This tissue graft acts as a scaffolding for a new ligament to grow on.

With an ACL sprain or tear, the knee swells within 24 hours. The pain and swelling may go away, but resuming sports with an unstable knee can cause further damage.

To protect your knees, consider neuro-muscular training, Dr. Bengtson suggests. Programs like Sportsmetrics, developed by Cincinnati Sports Medicine, use simple, repetitive drills like landing from a jump with the knees squared to the front in order to train the body.

“lt’s about strengthening the muscle and building muscle habit,” Dr. Bengtson explains. “lt’s especially relevant for female athletes, who have a tendency towards hip weakness or variable quad-to-hamstring ratios that put them at risk to be knock-kneed when landing. That’s a position of risk for ACL tears.”

Dr. Bengtson recommends OrthoInfo.org (website of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons) as a resource for athletes and patients who may want to learn more on their own.

See an orthopaedic surgeon if you have:

- Pain limiting your ability to bear weight
- Swelling in or around the knee. For severe swelling, see your doctor right away; for mild swelling, if it doesn’t subside in a week
- Unstable knee (“giving out”)
- Catching or locking in your knee, where it gets stuck in position and can’t move for a few seconds

To make an appointment with Dr. Bengtson, call (507) 646-8900.
Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group begins

A new support group for people with traumatic brain injury (TBI) will meet on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Northfield Hospital in Meeting Room A. This free support group brings people with TBI together to share their experiences, learn how others have adapted, and encourage each other.

To learn more, contact group leader Shelley Klevos at 612-812-1311 or via email at shelleyklevos@gmail.com.

Birth Center offers nitrous oxide

Women now have another alternative to ease pain during labor. Nitrous oxide – commonly called “laughing gas” – is a self-administered inhaled gas that helps reduce pain and anxiety and causes relaxation. The Birth Center now offers nitrous oxide along with other options for pain control, including movement, whirlpool tub use, narcotics and regional anesthesia (epidural).

New! Evening hours for adults

Kids aren’t the only ones who need a doctor in the evening. The Northfield Clinic now offers evening hours for adults on Mondays, from 5:00 to 8:00 pm. Pediatric hours continue from 5:00 to 8:00 pm on Mondays and Tuesdays. Now caring for yourself fits your busy schedule better. Say ahhh.