



Harris County Hospital District

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Connie Chavez
Office: 713-566-4370
Cell: 713-240-6484
Connie_Chavez@hchd.tmc.edu
On-call pager: 713-566-6430

How to Survive Holiday Travel with the Kids

HOUSTON (Nov. 6, 2006) – Grumpy faces are reflected in the rearview mirror, and you know they’re getting restless. You try to ignore the fidgeting, the squirming and the incessant foot-tapping on the back of the seat. But when they ask, “Are we there yet?” in that whining voice, you know you’re in for a bumpy ride, complete with lost tempers, sibling disputes and unexpected pit stops.

Each year, families journey far and wide to spend the holidays with their loved ones. And each year, holiday travel turns family trips from memorable to regrettable. Traveling with children can test your patience and strain your sanity, but there are things you can do before your trip to ease the hassle and stress.

“Whether you are going by car or by plane, there are important factors to consider when traveling with kids,” said Dr. Mary Rocha, a pediatrician at Ben Taub General Hospital’s El Jardin pediatric clinic. “Every child has individual needs based on their age, personality, and overall mental and physical health. All of these should be taken into account when planning a family trip.”

Rocha suggests that parents think ahead and prepare for any special wants or needs their child may have. Does your child use a pacifier or security blanket? Do they have a favorite toy or stuffed animal? Will he or she only drink from a particular sippy cup? Having these items readily available during your trip will help appease smaller children and may prevent outbursts, said Rocha. Also, she adds, parents should explain to children ahead of time that they will be away from home for more than a day and may be around people they don’t know well for extended periods of time.

“No matter how small they are, children are more aware of their surroundings than adults give them credit for,” said Rocha. “It’s a good idea to tell children where you are going and what to expect. Talking to them ahead of time will help them prepare mentally for the change.”

###

Holiday Travel Tips

From the Harris County Hospital District

Planning Tips

- Assess your child's physical and emotional needs and plan accordingly
- Create a checklist of items to pack
- Talk to your child about the trip, including where you are going and what to expect. If flying to your destination, describe security checks and procedures
- Involve children who are old enough in the planning process. Within reason, allow them to select their favorite clothes and toys for the trip and help your child pack his or her bags
- Create a countdown calendar to help build anticipation and excitement
- Make sure you have enough prescription medication on hand for the duration of your trip. If needed, obtain prescription refills early
- Gather contact information for your child's pediatrician and pharmacist and keep it handy
- Identify a local physician and hospital at your destination, if needed
- Make sure everyone is well-rested for the trip
- Check with your local airline for security measures and carry-on restrictions

Travel Day Tips

- If traveling by car, make frequent rest stops to allow passengers to use the bathroom, stretch their legs and breathe fresh air. Watch for oncoming traffic and never leave children unattended
- Follow children's regular schedules as closely as possible for sleeping, napping and eating
- Bring pillows and blankets for comfort
- Make sure children are wearing loose, comfortable clothing and shoes
- Bring favorite toys or games to occupy each child
- Bring bottled water or juice and snacks like pretzels, trail mix and dry cereal
- Pack a travel kit with waterless hand sanitizer, baby wipes, diaper rash ointment, and prescription and over the counter medications
- Gastro-intestinal problems are the most common ailments associated with traveling. Monitor children closely for signs of illness. Dehydration often results from diarrhea and vomiting, and infants and children can become dehydrated much quicker than adults