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CHILDREN'S  
HOSPITAL®

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We're here for the children

# CHILDREN'S HEALTH TALK

A Miami Children's Hospital Community Update, December 2005

## HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH ARTHRITIS

Matthew Ridge is a bright-eyed honor roll student who almost never misses a day of school and loves to swim and play basketball. Few would guess that this 11-year-old dynamo suffers from arthritis.

Diagnosed with juvenile psoriatic arthritis at the age of 6, Matthew has since been under the care of Dr. Rafael Rivas-Chacon, Director of Miami Children's Hospital's (MCH) Rheumatology Center. Dr. Rivas-Chacon works closely with Matthew's family to manage the delicate balancing act of the boy's treatment and minimize pain associated with his condition.

"Dr. Rivas-Chacon and the Rheumatology Center staff are so caring and so personable. The doctor is always so accessible and cares for these children as if they are his own," said Matthew's mother Claudia.

Founded in 1989, the MCH Rheumatology Center is the largest pediatric program in South Florida, with more than 5,000 patient visits per year. The center provides a scope of service not offered anywhere else in the region, including comprehensive, multidisciplinary diagnosis, treatment and support for families whose children suffer from juvenile arthritis and related disorders such as lupus and scleroderma.

"The Rheumatology Center brings together a full spectrum of specialists to support the care of these complex disorders," said Dr. Rivas-Chacon. "Our goal is to control disease, minimize discomfort and support the child and family in achieving



Patient Matthew Ridge with Dr. Rafael Rivas-Chacon,  
Director of the Miami Children's Rheumatology Center

a high quality of life."

The multidisciplinary team includes physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, behavioral medicine specialists, pharmacists and dietitians. In addition, the Rheumatology Center has ready access to the full spectrum of pediatric sub-specialists based at Miami Children's. These specialists are readily available to consult on complex cases.

The Rheumatology Center's Juvenile Arthritis Program helps families like the Ridges through a comprehensive program that includes:

- Joint protection. Children learn the importance of good posture, energy conservation and use of assistive devices to minimize stress on joints.

- Exercise. The center's team develops an individualized exercise program and physical activity guide for the child.
- Pain management. Both the child and family members learn new ways to control pain and deal with the associated stresses of daily living.
- Nutrition. A balanced diet is developed with recommendations for supplements if indicated.
- School issues. Parents are assisted in educating teachers about childhood arthritis and developing a plan that allows the child flexibility in learning and adapting for his or her needs.
- Medications. Extensive orientation is given to the parents and children about the proper use and side effects of the drugs and treatment of the rheumatic conditions.

For parents, the Rheumatology Center provides numerous support services, including opportunities to meet and network with other parents, as well as participation in Camp Funrise, the center's annual week-long summer camp program for children with rheumatological conditions.

Through the hospital's Clinical Research Center, the Rheumatology Center is involved in ongoing studies on juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, dermatomyositis and other conditions, including clinical trials of medications. The center's staff also provides training for pediatric residents from the University of Miami as well as for physicians pursuing fellowship training in rheumatology.

For parents, call (305) 663-8505 or visit the hospital's website at [www.mch.com](http://www.mch.com). Information on the Rheumatology Center is found under the Medical Services heading.

## HOLIDAY SAFETY

Candles and lighted trees are all part of the holiday experience. But combine these festive elements with all the myriad distractions of the season and it can be a recipe for trouble.



Here are some guidelines for a safe holiday season from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

### Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant."
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green and needles are hard to pull from branches.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose the fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- Be sure to keep the tree stand filled with water.
- Check all tree lights—even if you've just purchased them—before hanging them on the tree. Make sure all the bulbs work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

### Candles

- Keep burning candles out of children's reach; keep matches and lighters out of sight and locked away. Do not leave candles unattended. Teach children not to touch burning candles.
- Do not place candles near draperies or anything that might easily catch fire. Make sure you put out candles when you leave a room.
- Check smoke alarms in your home to make sure they are working properly. If you do not have alarms in place, this is a good season to install them on every level and in every sleeping area. Test alarms once a month and replace the batteries at least once a year.
- Plan and practice several fire escape routes from each room of your home and identify an outside meeting place.

Miami Children's Hospital wishes everyone a safe and healthy holiday season!

For a referral to a Miami Children's Hospital physician, please call 888-MCH-DOCS (624-3627).

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION CALENDER

### Infant Massage (4 week series)

Wednesdays beginning on January 18, 6 pm – 7:30 pm

Infant massage is designed for children ages 0 – 15 months. Our hands-on method insures that you will learn the art of interactive massage to suit your baby's individual needs and developmental level. Infant massage encourages relaxation for both parent and baby, promotes longer and deeper sleeping patterns and can relieve colic symptoms among other benefits.



### CPR Class

Tuesday, January 31, 6 pm to 8 pm

This course in Pediatric CPR teaches parents, grandparents and caregivers how to administer CPR to infants and children. Please call 305-662-8282 for further information.

### Social Skills Group for Adolescents with Autism

Wednesdays, 4 pm to 4:45 pm

Music therapy is used to enhance social skills among teens with autism. For more information call 305-666-6511 ext. 2434.

### Emergent Language Group for Children with Autism

Thursdays, 4 pm to 4:45 pm

Music therapy is used to promote language development in children with autism. For more information call 305-666-6511 ext. 2434.

### Sibshops

Monthly fun-filled sessions for siblings of children with special needs. The program provides opportunities for children to share personal feelings, experiences and concerns, while taking part in fun activities. For more information call 305-669-7142.

### Child Passenger Safety

Child safety is our priority. Child passenger safety technicians will check your child's seat for defects, recalls, installation and fit. Please contact the Division of Preventive Medicine at 305-663-6800 for more information.

## NO GIFT IS TOO SMALL



Your tax deductible donation to Miami Children's Hospital Foundation supports the programs and research at Miami Children's Hospital, the leading provider of medical care to children in South Florida.

My gift to Miami Children's Hospital Foundation is...

\$50  \$100  \$250  \$500  \$1,000  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

My check is enclosed (please make payable to MCH Foundation)

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Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Three ways to donate:

1. Call 305-666-2889
2. Visit us at [www.mchf.org](http://www.mchf.org)
3. Mail the completed form to:



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