

## SOUTHERN ALABAMA + HEALTHCARE PROFILES

# Healthy for the Holidays

Pediatrician Jenny Alexander, M.D., advocates for fun, safety, and moderation during the holiday season.

Jenny Alexander, M.D., has always found herself surrounded by children.

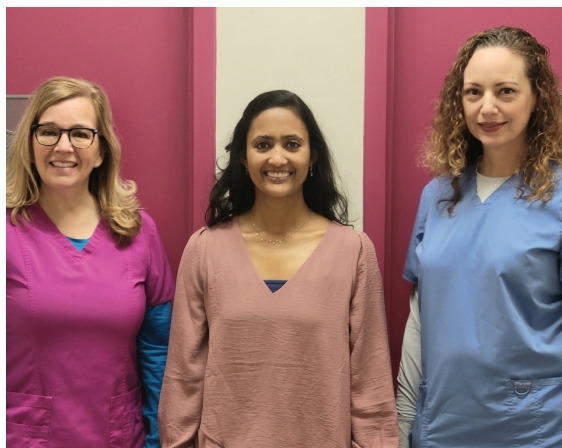
"I've known since I was very young and shadowing my mom that caring for children is what I love to do," says Dr. Alexander, who began running Alexander Pediatrics in 2011 after her parents retired. "I love working with kids and feel like one at heart. Children are easy to mold into a healthy direction. If you teach them to stay active when they're young, they're more likely to develop healthy, lifelong habits."

In the business long enough to see multiple generations of patients, Dr. Alexander says her work fills her with a joy that's immeasurable. Just as their parents trusted her to care for them, now some of those children are entrusting her with kids of their own.

"This is a family-oriented practice. They're my patients, but they also feel like my kids. I've seen them grow through the years and watched as they developed into adults," she says.

## BECOMING SOCIAL

Though the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic may be behind us, many kids are still dealing with its mental and physical impact.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Jill Fitch, CRNP; Jenny Alexander, M.D.; and Michelle Kirkland, CRNP.



"A lot of kids have shut down and opt to stay at home glued to screens rather than play outside or spend time with friends," Dr. Alexander explains. "Parents need to encourage them to get back out there. Isolation isn't good for any of us."

While pushing for kids to socialize with others, she notes that it's still important to stay mindful to minimize the spread of disease.

"Explain both sides to them. Express concern to keep them from harm, but also let them go back into the world. Do it gradually and carefully. Start with a small gathering and build from there," Dr. Alexander says. "Being too sheltered keeps them from being kids, which may have negative long-term effects. Don't destroy their childhood out of fear."

## WALKING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

It's easy for the holidays to become a time of overindulgence and minimal physical activity, but when sweet treats become a routine snack, it's wise to keep things in moderation for both children and adults.

"Obese or not, moderation is necessary," says Dr. Alexander. "I'm not saying to cut out all snack food, but limits are important."

Diet is one part of the healthy equation, but keeping active is equally important for the entire family, including while on vacations. By finding physical activities the family can enjoy together—such as going on walks, hiking, biking, or spending time up and moving—everyone can stay at their best.

"Finding a reason to be active every day can help kids and their families stay healthy no matter the season," Dr. Alexander says.

