TIME FOR KIDS

All in a Day's Work

ER Doctor



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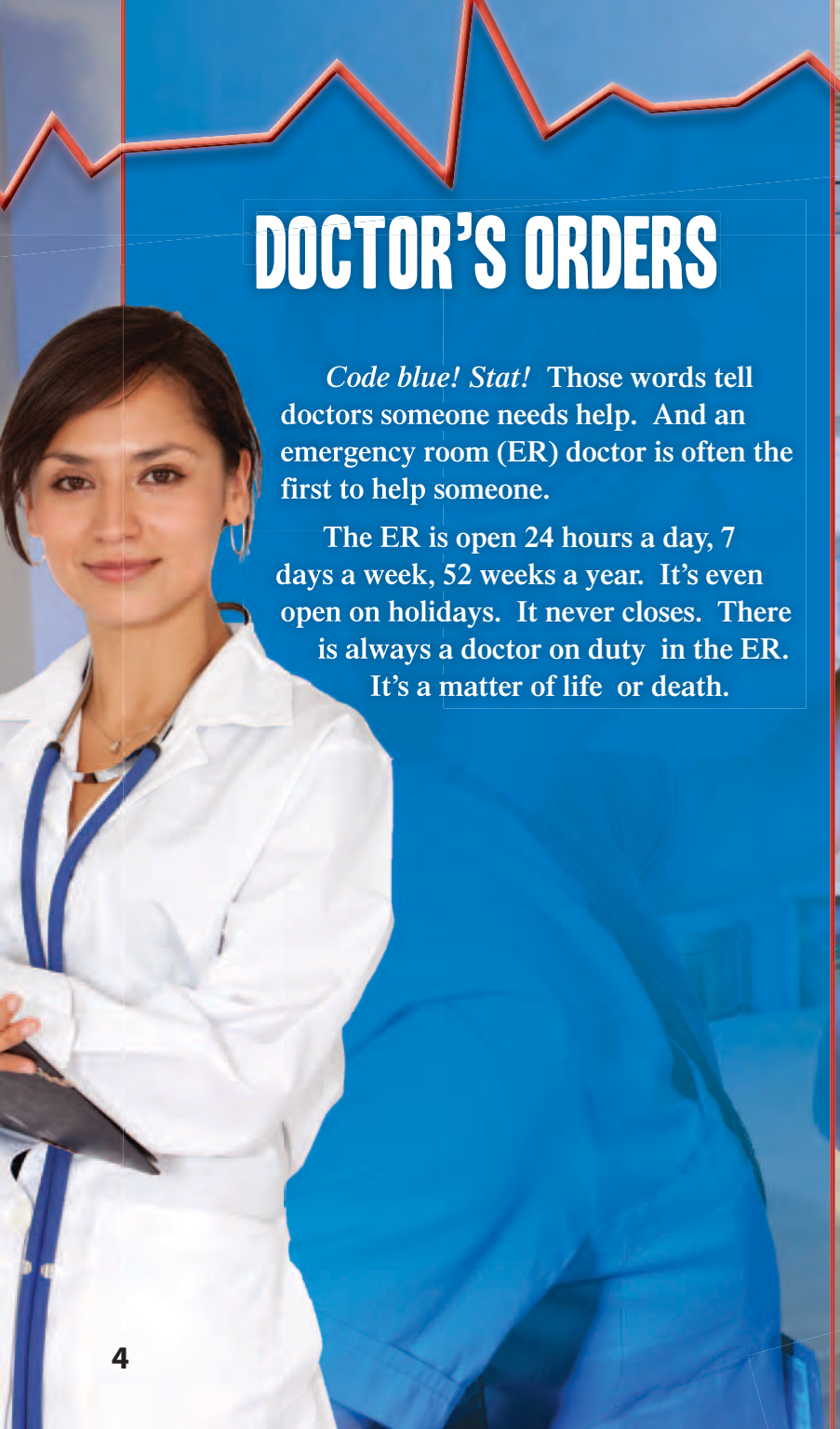
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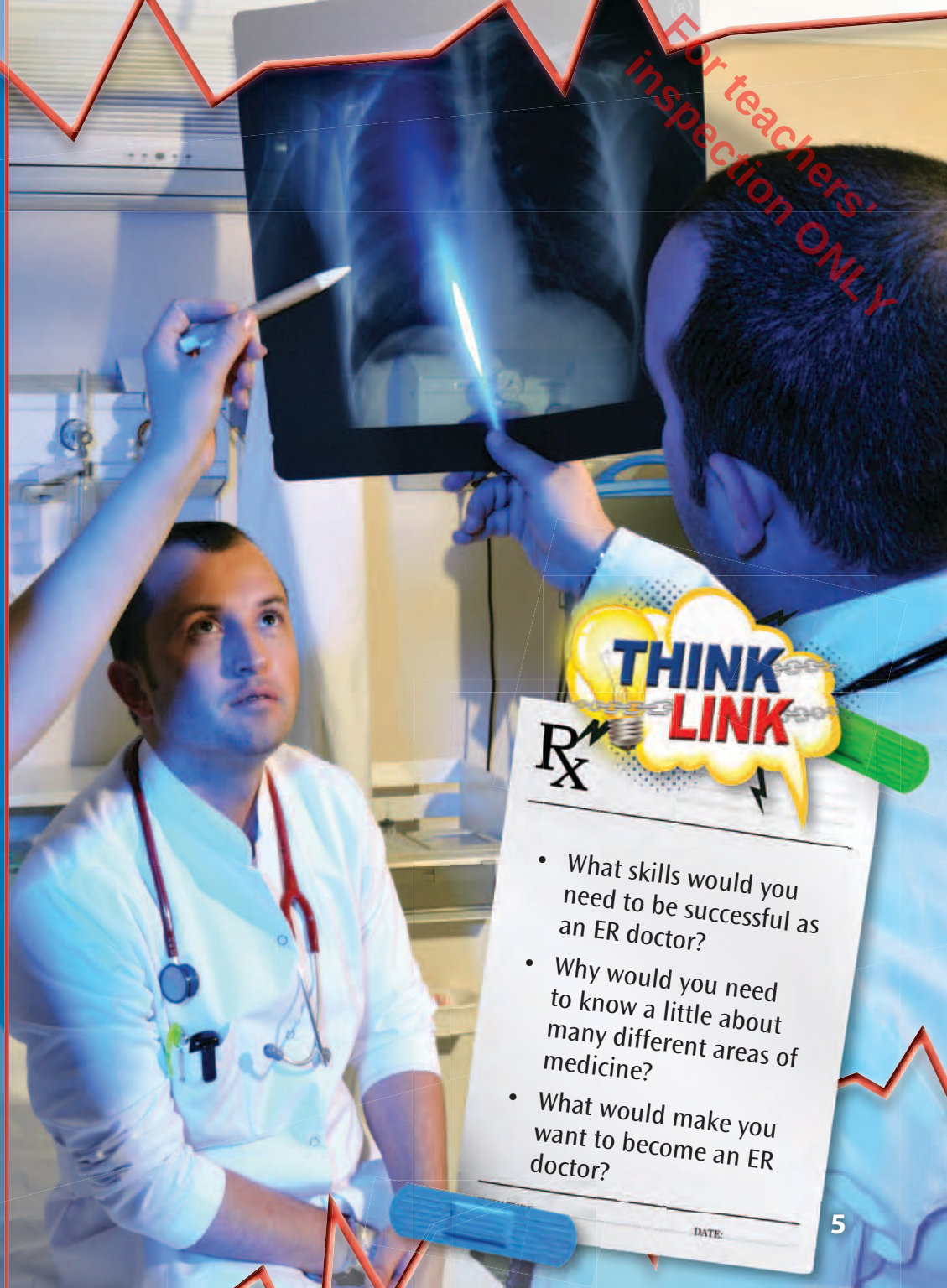
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DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Code blue! Stat! Those words tell doctors someone needs help. And an emergency room (ER) doctor is often the first to help someone.

The ER is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. It's even open on holidays. It never closes. There is always a doctor on duty in the ER. It's a matter of life or death.





THINK LINK

Rx

- What skills would you need to be successful as an ER doctor?
- Why would you need to know a little about many different areas of medicine?
- What would make you want to become an ER doctor?

DATE:

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FIRST THINGS FIRST

Arriving at the ER can be hectic. If a patient is ill, the last thing he or she wants to do is wait for **treatment**. But the ER is often filled with patients. Some of them may have woken up with a bad cold in the middle of the night. Others may have been in a car accident, suffered a heart attack, or taken a turn for the worse. In a regular doctor's office, people make an appointment to see the doctor. But in the ER, the doctor must treat the patients with the most serious **symptoms**—whenever they show up.

Triage nurses talk with each patient. They determine what kind of care each patient needs. They decide who needs help the most. If there are 10 patients and only one doctor, this process helps the doctor know who to treat first.

Patient Profiles

ER doctors work with everyone from young babies to seniors. They work with people who have the sniffles and people who are dying. ER doctors treat people who have been in car wrecks and people who have broken bones from falls or fights. They even deliver babies.



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Trauma Centers

Some hospitals have **trauma** centers built to handle the worst injuries. Some trauma centers are equipped to handle serious surgeries, and some are not.

Level I	**Specialists** are available 24 hours a day. The hospital also offers in-house surgery, **anesthesia** (an-uhs-THEE-zhuh), and a research program. Being treated at a Level I center increases survival rates up to 25 percent.
Level II	These hospitals offer in-house anesthesia, specialists, and surgery, but no research programs.
Level III	This type of trauma center only offers surgery and anesthesia during certain hours. Only a few select specialists are available.
Level IV	These centers are located in rural areas. They are usually places where patients stop before moving on to more advanced trauma centers.

The ER doctor's job is to stabilize patients. It isn't always possible to finish treating all patients. They may need to be admitted into the hospital for further treatment. From there, the ER doctor turns the patient over to another doctor in the hospital.

The only thing ER doctors can expect is the unexpected. A patient could have a bad flu or an exotic disease no one has ever seen before. These doctors must know a lot about many different conditions. They study medical **journals** to keep up with the latest research.

Long Hours

Most people work eight hours a day, five days a week. A typical **shift** in the ER might be 8–12 hours long. Many doctors work nearly 200 hours a month.

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Around the Clock Care

Doctors rarely know what to expect each day, so they plan for the unexpected. They start by going to the bathroom and eating right before they start working. They might not get another chance for the next 12 hours! A day in the ER may look something like this.

6:00 A.M.	*Scope out the waiting room. The night doctor transfers patients to the next doctor on duty.*
8:00 A.M.	***Rounds** begin. ER doctors must visit the sickest patients first.*
9:00 A.M.	*A Level 1 trauma patient is admitted. This patient is treated first because of the severity of the injury.*
10:00 A.M.	*Return to rounds. Check each patient's symptoms.*
11:00 A.M.	*Record notes for later use.*
12:00 P.M.	*Eat a few bites.*
1:00 P.M.	*Manage patients' needs as they get better or worse. Get lab results, discharge patients, and take medical histories.*
5:00 P.M.	*Give important information to the ER doctor starting the night shift.*
6:00 P.M.	*Go home, relax, spend time with friends and family.*