

Banish Bad Bedtime Behavior



Some parents believe sleep problems only occur during infancy. But sleep problems may continue throughout childhood if they are not addressed promptly.

As much as parents may anticipate their children's bedtime as a point in the day when they can finally enjoy some peace and quiet, there are those moms and dads who dread bedtime, which can be frustrating for even the most level-headed parents. Parents may face a host of issues at bedtime each night, but each requires patience and perseverance so bad behaviors can be broken once and for all.

Wired Children

What parent hasn't experienced a child who is too excited to go to bed? Experts say that, depending on their age, children need 9 to 11 hours of sleep every night. Most children should be in bed by 8 p.m. to get the sleep their bodies need. If you miss the window of time to get them in bed, you may enter the overtired and wired period. A consistent bedtime and wake time can help set the pace for happy kids who are sleepy when they should be. Their bodies will adjust to the schedule, and over time they will involuntarily become tired when

the time is right.

Over-stimulation

Children have many more toys and recreational activities at their disposal than their parents and grandparents did when they were children. The presence of these devices, including video game consoles and personal tablet computers, may not make for an ideal sleep environment. Sleep therapists advise that television watching and activities that engage the mind a good deal should be ceased prior to bed and replaced with more relaxing activities. This can include listening to soothing music or reading a few pages of a favorite story. Avoid activities that will increase energy levels, such as exercise or rough-housing, before bed.

The Bed Hog

There are plenty of parents who embrace the concept of the "family bed," where everyone sleeps comfortably together. However, those who want their beds to be their private domain may be put off and disturbed by small feet kicking them in the

night. But when faced with a midnight temper tantrum, many parents relent and let their child climb into their bed. This can cause a pattern of behavior that is difficult to break.

Sleep training involves getting toddlers or older children accustomed to sleeping in their own beds again. It may begin by a parent "camping out" in the child's room to provide security. Over a period of days, the parent gradually moves closer to the door and then out of the room entirely once the child can comfortably sleep solo in his or her room. Initially, the process may be uncomfortable for kids and parents alike. But eventually it may solidify good sleeping habits.

Inconsistency

A routine lets children know when it is time to go to sleep. Lacking a consistent schedule may not provide the physical cues that it is time to go to bed. Adhere to a routine each and every night so children become trained to go to bed at a particular time. This routine may include brushing teeth, picking out pajamas and then snuggling together for a few minutes. Children are creatures of habit, and knowing what to expect will help set them up for sleeping success.

Safety Issues

Some parents cannot get a good night's sleep because they worry about their children rising in the middle of the night and wandering the house unattended or even leaving the home. Child-proofing the home can calm those concerns. Placing a secure gate at the doorway of the child's room can limit roaming, while alarms placed on doors and windows can alert parents if a child is trying to open a window or exit the home.

Parents can take many steps to fix problematic bedtime behaviors and ensure the entire household gets the sleep they need.

Opting Out Of Vaccinations Potentially Dangerous

Childhood vaccinations are issued to help prevent children from getting sick by building their immunity to diseases that were once prolific. But in the wake of confusing information regarding the safety of vaccinations, particularly the concern that some may be linked to the onset of autism, more and more parents are opting out of having their children vaccinated — sometimes with unfortunate consequences.

Many diseases that are effectively prevented by simple vaccines have cropped up once more. This can be attributed to children simply not getting fully vaccinated. Nearly 80 percent of parents are uncomfortable about having their children vaccinated, according to a survey analyzed by researchers at the CDC. Pain from the needle itself and uncertainty about the safety of vaccines is leading many parents to forego shots or delay certain vaccinations until their children are older. It is estimated that roughly 8 percent of American children are now not getting regular vaccinations or doing alternate schedules, and 2 percent are not getting shots at all.

Some parents would like to have their children vaccinated but have postponed routine visits due to unemployment and subsequent loss of health insurance. Some areas have even fell victim to budget cuts that have led to shortages of necessary vaccines.

In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued an alert regarding Haemophilus influenza type b, commonly referred to as Hib. Five children in Minnesota contracted the disease, three of whom who were not vaccinated.

The CDC also reported that there were 17 outbreaks and 222 cases of measles reported in 2011. A disease that was essentially wiped out in North America is now showing up again and the



numbers are rising. Dr. Jason Bowling, an infectious disease specialist, said that in 2011 the United States had the highest number of measles cases of any country in the last 15 years. Although it is likely that most of the cases were contracted outside of the country, kids who haven't been vaccinated are highly susceptible to measles onset as a result, potentially leading to a greater number of outbreaks in the United States and Canada.

Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a highly infectious respiratory disease that was once considered eradicated but has also made a resurgence. Various states across the country have reported many whopping cough outbreaks, to the point that it has been labeled an epidemic once more. Health officials in Washington state have said that the number of outbreaks from spring 2012 are the highest since the 1940s. While whooping

cough is usually not fatal among older children and young adults, it can be very dangerous for infants.

Most health professionals agree that vaccinations are important to the well-being of the child and the community, providing the safest way to prevent certain diseases or reduce their severity. There are several recommended vaccinations that children should receive:

- * DtaP: Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis
- * Hepatitis A
- * Hepatitis B
- * Hib
- * Influenza
- * MMR: Measles, mumps and rubella
- * Pneumococcal
- * Polio
- * Varicella: Chickenpox
- * Smallpox

Parents who have any concerns about vaccinations should speak to a physician to weigh the pros and cons of each vaccination.

School Bus Safety Tips To Impart To Youngsters

Each day thousands upon thousands of children board school buses to take them to and from school. Parents and caregivers entrust their children's well-being to the care of school bus drivers and aides. Although parents may worry about school bus accidents, such accidents are few and far between.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advises that school buses are designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in avoiding crashes and protecting against injury. Buses are arguably the safest mode of transportation for getting kids to and from school. By keeping millions of cars off the roads surrounding schools, school buses contribute to less crowded roadways, which are less conducive to accidents.

Danger zone

Though parents may feel

buses are most likely to be in accidents while in transit, experts advise that children are more likely to get hurt during pickups and drop-offs when they're in the "danger zone" of the bus. The danger zone is a 10-foot radius around the outside of the bus. Bus drivers and other motorists find kids in the danger zone are more difficult to see, and children can get struck by either the bus or oncoming cars that fail to stop when the bus is picking kids up or dropping them off.

Knowing the safety rules

While a large part of protecting children is on the shoulders of the school bus driver, it is also vital for passengers to learn the basics of school bus safety. Kindergarten or children who are riding the bus for the first time should be taught the rules of school bus

safety.

Some schools offer a school bus tour prior to the new school year. This lets youngsters acclimate themselves with the look and feel of the school bus. This introduction also may include information about bus safety, but parents can also educate their children (and themselves) about using caution in and around the bus by following these guidelines.

* Get to the bus stop 5 to 10 minutes prior to the assigned pickup time. Rushing last-minute can lead to injury, especially if you're chasing down the bus.

* Remain on the sidewalk or grass at the bus stop. Do not step off the curb into the street until the bus has arrived and is completely stopped.

* When boarding the bus, go directly to a seat and sit down. Buckle up if there are seatbelts on the bus.

* Remain seated while the bus is in motion.

* Keep voices low so as not to distract the driver.

* Keep your head and hands inside of the bus, and never hang out of the window.

* Do not throw things on the bus or play rough with friends or classmates.

* Keep the aisle clear at all times.

* Be careful when getting off the bus. Hold on while going down the stairs.

* Only get off at your designated stop unless you have permission to get off elsewhere.

* When exiting the bus, walk at least 10 steps past the front of the bus and cross in front where the driver can see you. Do not cross behind the bus.

* Wait for the driver to give you a signal that it is safe to cross. Be sure to check that all cars on the

road have come to a complete stop.

* Get to the sidewalk or off the street as quickly as possible.

* If you've forgotten something on the bus, do not run back and attempt to retrieve it. The driver might not see you and start the bus. Rather, call the bus company and see if you can pick it up at another time.

* Do not get into the cars of strangers waiting around bus stops, even if they offer to take you home.

Parents can arrange to meet with bus drivers so that they will recognize their



faces. Adults also can encourage schools to host bus safety courses to further ensure their youngsters are safe.

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