

Penridge Pediatric Associates

Pointers and Pearls

Spring 2009



DO YOU HAVE A TWEEN?

Somewhere between childhood and adolescence lies a twilight zone called the “tween” years. Kids ages 9 to 12 are often caught between wanting the security of youth and craving the independence of being a grown up. One moment, the tween is demanding to be treated like an adult; the next she is acting childish and needy. One moment he complains you never listen to him; the next he is refusing to talk to you. Eyes roll, doors slam, hormones rage on. What to do? First of all, say experts, be patient. Your tween is entering a “separation phase,” a necessary and vital stage in your child’s life. It is a time that will help her form her own ideas and opinions in order to become an independent adult. Your child may disagree with everything you say, criticize everything you do, and generally act self-absorbed and moody. But take heart – the tween years don’t last forever, and you can take steps to survive them.

- Don’t invade her “personal bubble.” Tweens need their space. What may seem like withdrawal to you is just your child’s way of saying she needs some time and space to find out about herself. Let her know you are always there if and when she needs you.
- Pick your battles. If your preteen’s room is a mess, look the other way. If her taste in music and clothes annoy you, don’t mention it. If you make everything a battleground, you will be engaged in an ongoing war which no one will win. Flexibility in smaller matters will make your child more likely to come to you – and listen to you – when she is faced with serious problems such as peer pressure, friendship problems, and choices

regarding drinking, drugs and sex.

- Be a good listener. Be an active listener and offer your complete attention for matters big or small. Don’t belittle your child’s problems no matter how minor they seem to you; to your child they are huge.
- Don’t be judgmental or easily shocked. Try to stay cool no matter what your child tells you. If you get angry, shocked or preachy, your child will stop coming to you with



questions and delicate topics. Gently lead her in the right direction through calm conversation and open communication.

- Notice positive behavior and offer praise. Sometimes it is easier to find things to criticize about your child than to praise. Resist the urge. Tell your child what he is doing right, and commend him for it.
- Don’t offer advice. Or at least don’t let it sound like advice. Ask your child to discuss a situation, and then lead her in a discussion to bring her to the logical solution.
- Let him make mistakes. Resist the temptation to “fix” everything for your child. As long as there is no risk of physical or emotional danger, allow him to make a few mistakes; failure is a good teacher. Be there to guide and encourage him, but not to say, “I told you so.”
- Give her some freedom. But explain

that freedom is a privilege, not a right. Let her know that if she misuses that freedom, it will be taken away until she proves she can handle it.

- Be open to compromise. Negotiation helps preteens to think and prepare to make a case for themselves and their beliefs. Compromising lets them know that you respect their point of view and expect them to respect yours.
- Plan for family time. As much as your tween seeks to hole up in his room, he still needs to spend time with the family. Have dinner together; take walks, volunteer for a community project together – anything that brings the preteen closer to the family.

DRY SKIN, isn’t dangerous, but it can cause irritating and uncomfortable dry, red patches on your child’s body or face. Children of all ages can have mild to severe dry skin.

Luckily, the condition can be easily treated at home with some precautions and tender loving care:

- Don’t let your child soak in the bathtub for more than 10 minutes. Use warm water, not hot, as hot water tends to dry out the skin faster. Avoid bubble bath, and choose a soap that has the word “gentle” on the label.
- Don’t dry your child off completely after a bath. Instead, pat her down gently, then slather on a moisturizer (like Lubriderm lotion, Eucerin cream, Sarna for Sensitive Skin, and others) to seal in some of the water that remains on her skin.
- Avoid bath oils, as they do nothing to moisturize the skin, and can make the bathtub slippery and dangerous.
- Look for causes of sudden skin irritations. If your child is suddenly sporting red patches and complaining

of itching, consider if there has been a change in the type of soap, moisturizer, laundry detergent, softener, or cosmetics used. A new product could be irritating to the skin.

- Call us if patches of dry skin are persistent, or if your child complains of itching or discomfort.

COLIC

Characteristics of colic:

Predictable crying episodes. The baby often cries about the same time every day for no clear reason

- episodes can last three hours or more

- Intense or inconsolable crying. The baby may be very difficult, even impossible, to comfort during crying episodes

- Body changes. The baby will curl up his legs, clench his fists, and tense up his body while crying

- Medications such as simethicone (Mylicon) have not proved to be helpful for colic, and other medications can have serious side effects

- Overfeeding to quiet your baby may cause vomiting and could be the first step to becoming obese. Do not give your colicky baby extra milk (breast or formula), water or juice

- Alternative therapies, such as herbal teas, can be dangerous. Ask us before trying any complementary or alternative therapies for colic

The best ways to calm a colicky baby are:

- Swaddling Wrap the baby securely in a lightweight blanket with his arms tucked inside so that he can't flail

- Hold him close and cuddle

- Offer a pacifier. For many babies, sucking is a soothing activity

- Keep her in motion. Gently rock your baby in your arms or in an infant swing. Take her for a walk, or buckle her baby in the car seat for a drive

- Make a little noise. Sing to your baby or play soft recorded music.

Turn on the background noise — switch on a kitchen fan, humidifier or white noise machine, or play a CD of environmental sounds such as ocean waves or gentle rain

Not all excessive crying is due to colic. Ask us to check the baby to make sure that she doesn't have a medical problem such as gastroesophageal reflux, or other

condition.

Taking care of a colicky infant can be exhausting and stressful, so take care of yourself too:

- Take a break. Ask your spouse to take over for a while. If you have a trusted family member or baby sitter who knows about the situation and can handle the baby calmly, let them step in for you occasionally during the crying bouts

- Stay positive. Remember, colic is temporary. By the time your baby is about 3 months old, it will probably be a thing of the past

- Stay healthy and well-rested. Eat well, make time for exercise, and try to sleep when the baby does

- Recognize your frustration level. If you think your baby's crying might cause you to lose control, put the baby in a safe place (such as a crib) and go to another room. If necessary, contact your doctor or a local crisis intervention service for help.

INTERNET INFO

Move over grandmom. Outta the way, Dr. Spock. There's a new parenting resource in town. It can tell you how to cure a baby's diaper rash or choose the proper stroller; give you tips on disciplining your child or tell you what to look for if you suspect your son is doing drugs. No matter what a parent needs, help is only a mouse click away. The explosion of online resources that are helping moms and dads cope with some of the challenges of being a parent is drawing "surfers" in droves. Informational and self-help websites, blogs, message boards and chat rooms are offering information and advice on raising kids 24 hours a day, seven days a week. According to a recent survey, about 61% of moms seek Internet advice several times a day. Internet information can calm a frantic new mom by putting her in touch with other new moms who are going through similar experiences. It can help a single parent deal with the stress of raising a child alone. It can tell parents what to look for in a daycare facility. Whatever the parenting question, there is a website to match it.

BUT, not all health information is created equal. To get the most out of online parenting resources:

- Take into consideration the source and the advice that is being given.

- Bear in mind that not everyone on a blog or in a chat room is an expert, and not every Web site will give advice that is accurate or concurs with your parenting style.

- Do not take medical advice from questionable Web sites (sites that are not affiliated with accredited hospitals or medical organizations), bloggers or chat room chatterers without checking with us first.

- For health information, use professional and government sites such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) and the National Institutes of Health (www.nih.gov). Vaccine consent and information forms can be viewed at www.immunize.org/vis

The address of the Pennridge Pediatric website, currently being enhanced is www.pennridgepediatrics.com.

FROM THE SECRETARIES

- Unfortunately for all of us, insurance information needs to be verified at each visit, no matter how often. So please bring your insurance information with you all the time. Co-pays too please.

- New policy at CHOP. They will not see patients without a referral, so if your insurance requires one please request one at least two business days before your appointment.

- PPA does not participate with Cigna Open Access or HMO plans.

RESEARCH AT PPA

Ongoing studies at PPA include a meningococcal vaccine for infants and a new chickenpox vaccine. The meningococcus is the bacteria responsible for the recent illnesses in 4 University of Pennsylvania students. If you have any questions about these studies please call Bonnie Pforter at 215-257-2727.