



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by Lifetrack

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Parenting During a Serious Illness

Parenting is often challenging, but even more complicated when dealing with the physical and emotional symptoms of a serious illness. Even a young child will pick up on the emotional stress, and it is a good practice to begin talking about it even before a child fully understands the complexity of the illness. During these times, young children need support to feel secure. Here are a few practical tips to help the children you love.

Identify your illness. Call it what it is – “breast cancer” or “brain tumor.” Using words such as “lump” or “boo-boo” are confusing to young children. By naming your illness, you are telling your child you trust him with honest communication.

Let your child know what is happening and what to expect before she overhears it from someone else. Direct communication from you lets your child know she is important.

Welcome all of your child’s questions warmly.

Ask your child to tell you what he is wondering about or if there is something else he wants to know. Address his concerns. If you do not know the answer, it’s ok to say, “That’s a good question. I’ll need to think about it/talk about it with my doctor and get back to you.”

Respect your child’s wish to not talk. Share basic information in order



to avoid confusion and surprises. Use language that your child will understand.

Schedule family times. Use these moments to give your child undivided attention.

Take care of yourself. Your well-being has a direct impact on your child. Get the help you need to feel confident in your medical treatment and to minimize side effects that may interfere with quality parenting time.

Children feel secure and hopeful when communication is kept open so their questions can be answered and their concerns addressed. Visit <http://www.mghpact.org/> for additional parenting tips.

Source: Marjorie K. Korff PACT Program, Parenting at Challenging Times, <http://www.mghpact.org/>.

When Baby Cries

Colic is a general term used for babies who cry more than three hours a day for more than three days a week. A baby with colic will often cry inconsolably despite all attempts to comfort and soothe. The cause of colic is unclear. Some experts think that colic may be connected to the development of the infant’s intestinal system, related to acid reflux, or to food allergies.

Parents of babies with colic often say that the babies look like they are angry, in pain, or have gas. Other characteristics include:

- Higher pitched, more frantic crying.
- Sudden crying, starting out of no where, and for no apparent reason.
- Rigid or stiff body, often with clenched fists.
- Bent legs and stomach may feel hard.

Colic often begins at two weeks after a baby’s due date, reaches a peak about six weeks past the due date, and generally ends by the time the baby is 12-14 weeks old. It may feel endless and unbearable while you are in the midst of it, but it will end.

Most doctors will recommend being “patient” because colic is not harmful and will go away on its own. But in order to make it through, you

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When Babies Cry

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may need to develop some great self-care strategies and enlist support.

- Focus on one day at a time (mark off the days on a calendar if that helps).
- Ask your doctor to consider the possibilities of food allergies or acid reflux, which can be remedied. If you are breastfeeding, try adjusting your diet to see if that affects your baby's crying spells.
- Ask for help from your spouse, family, friends, and a babysitter or nanny. This will be essential to getting through the first few months of your baby's life.

If the stress or crying becomes more than you can stand, call for help immediately. In the U.S. you can call the following:

24-Hour Parent Helpline:
1-888-435-7553
Crying Baby Hotline:
1-866-243-2229
Fussy Baby Warmline:
1-888-431-BABY

Ask a friend or family member to watch your baby while you take a break. If no one is immediately available, it is OK to put the baby in her crib and take a break before you try to console her again.

Source: *When Baby Won't Stop Crying*, http://www.helpguide.org/mental/crying_baby_colic_comfort.htm.

Raising a Summer Reader



A child's summer schedule can be packed with swimming, playing outside, camp, and family vacations. Such a busy schedule can make it challenging to find time for reading, but it is important to continue to create a lifelong habit and a love of reading. Here are some ways to make reading a part of your child's summer fun:

Explore your library. Visit your local library to check out books. Many libraries have summer reading programs and activities that are geared towards young children.

Read on the road. Make sure the back seat is stocked with favorite reads. Read the books aloud when you're not driving. Get some audiobooks (many libraries have large selections) and listen to them together.

Make your own books. Pick one of your family's favorite parts of summer such as baseball, ice cream, vacation,

or the pool. Have your child draw or cut out related pictures from magazines and catalogs and paste the pictures onto paper to make a book. Encourage your child to write text for each page or tell the story to you to write down (using your child's words). When you're done, read the book together.

Keep up the reading rituals. Even if everything else changes during the summer, keep up the reading routines already in place at your house.

Whether it's just before bedtime, on a car trip or under a shady tree make sure to read with your kids every day.

Source: http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/all_reading/summer_reading.html#cat20617.



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

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