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# american baby

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FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW PARENTS

HAPPY  
HALLOWEEN!

## Our Easy-Sew Costume For Baby

DIY

## A LOOK AT THE NEWBORN

## WHAT DO KIDS FEAR MOST?

## FETAL MOVEMENT: WHAT THOSE KICKS REALLY MEAN

## 10 WAYS TO KEEP A SITTER

## NURSING KNOW-HOW

150A



# Teach child methods to hasten sleep

**DEAR GOOD BEHAVIOR:** Since the age of 3 or 4, my granddaughter — who is now 9 — has had trouble getting to sleep at bedtime. She is read three stories each night, but she just can't get to sleep. Often during the night, she wakes up crying from a nightmare. Her parents have always given her quality time and been good and patient. Can you help us with this problem? — Mrs. D.H.

**DEAR MRS. D.H.:** Children have different sleep patterns and requirements, and there are many possible reasons for your situation. Generally, pediatricians suggest that a 9-year-old child needs an average of 11 hours of sleep per night. If your granddaughter awakes happily in the morning, then she may require less. Her parents can keep a record of how many hours she actually sleeps each night for a week to judge the amount that suits her and then set an appropriate bedtime.

By this age, your granddaughter needs to fall asleep by herself. Children often enjoy the time they spend with their parents so much that they postpone sleep to stretch the bedtime hour. There's great literature beyond a child's reading ability that can be delightfully shared in this manner. But after one story or chapter read aloud, your granddaughter can read alone for awhile, using books to lull herself asleep. Counting sheep or imagining a soothing scene are relaxing ways to encourage the sandman, too.

Your granddaughter's recurring nightmares may indicate that she is apprehensive about going to sleep. About 25 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 12 have nightmares. Your children might discuss any fears their daughter has and help her find ways to dispel them. They can teach her to use positive self talk to calm herself. If they discover she is frightened by the "monsters" lurking in the corner, she might reassure herself with, "I know that's not a monster. Mommy showed me how the lamp casts a shadow that looks like one." Her parents can then praise her for using her new coping skills and keep a record of nights without calls and then nightmareless nights.

As a special present initiating your granddaughter's new independence, give her a "p.m. kit" with a flashlight and a new book she would enjoy. Share your concerns and these ideas with your children, and then let them take over.

**DEAR GOOD BEHAVIOR:** My 5-year-old daughter holds her bladder for hours at a time before she will go to the bathroom. She's been to the doctor, but she still does this. What should I do? — J.S.

**DEAR J.S.:** As long as your family doctor has assured you that your daughter has no physical problems and that this practice can cause no harm, then the remaining problem is the inconvenience the habit causes. Since your child is able to hold urine

## GOOD BEHAVIOR

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## Good advice

Safety-proof your child by teaching him to play Shadow. Staying close enough to be your shadow will keep him nearby when shopping. Practice at home before going to busy malls and praise your child for keeping close.

for a long period of time, she appears to have sufficient bladder capacity. If she is so uptight that she is unable to relax enough to let the urine flow, then you will need to teach her relaxation exercises. However, if she waits until the last moment to empty her bladder, then she may wet herself because she is unable to control the urgency.

Many children intensely involved in play ignore the bladder signal until the need is too great. When the child is not mature enough to assume the responsibility for herself, the solution lies in motivating her to interrupt play to use the bathroom:

- Be preventive. If it has been a long time since she went, insist that your child try to use the bathroom before an outing. No pleading, simply say, "The car goes after you do."

- Supervise scheduled bathroom visits. If your child is having repeated accidents, don't scold her. Matter-of-factly tell her that the repeated accidents prove she is unable to assume the responsibility herself; so, during playtime, you will cue her to use the bathroom.

- Use positive practice. If your daughter does wet, restrict her for several hours from the activity she was engaged in at the time of the accident. Require her to practice coming inside and using the bathroom 10 times to motivate her to take the initiative. Continue with scheduled bathroom trips until your child is not having accidents and is going to the bathroom regularly on her own.

Continue these practices until your child is naturally assuming responsibility for her own body functions. If you give too much attention to bladder retention, you may encourage her to retain urine longer. Praise your child for using the bathroom appropriately and not having accidents.

Send your questions to *Good Behavior*: c/o The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Box 4689, Atlanta, Ga. 30302.