

A GRANDPARENT'S WISDOM

Becoming a grandparent is a wonderful opportunity to offer love, support and all the knowledge we have acquired throughout our years of raising children. We have many answers to the childrearing questions our sons and daughters may have and are only too happy to impart our words of wisdom. We feel we know best as we have been in these situations and our children are living proof that we did the right thing.

We might be surprised to learn that many childrearing methods have changed and what we once thought was best for our children has been proven to be not so. Some of our methods have been found to be harmful and even dangerous to our children.

As a member of the Citizens Review Panel for Washington County we work closely with the County and the Minnesota Department of Human Services to serve the needs of our children and strive to provide a safe and healthy environment for children of all ages.

We have studied the most up to date protocols and it may be surprising to many that the following methods are no longer recommended:

- Babies need to be on a strict schedule for sleeping and eating or they will be confused and anxious as they grow older.
 - Today: A schedule is a good thing, but be flexible. If baby is hungry it is fine to offer a snack. Let your baby sleep as much as is needed. You may need to try different schedules to best fit the needs of the child.
- Let your baby cry until falling asleep. You don't want to spoil your baby.
 - Today: A little crying or fussing when going to sleep is normal but if the baby is screaming and truly upset, keep baby up until he/she is tired. It makes life easier for all involved and does not spoil the baby.
- Always thoroughly wash or disinfect any toy or nook that falls to the floor.
 - Today: Cleanliness is always a good thing but no need to overdo cleansing at home. Use soap and water plus common sense. Children need to build up immunities as they grow and interact with others. However, expect daycare providers to sanitize toys and equipment as needed.
- Put your baby on his/her stomach when sleeping. Put a bumper pad around the crib and put a blanket over the baby along with some favorite toys.
 - Today: Placing babies on their backs to sleep is much safer. Newborns are not developed enough to have the strength to roll themselves from tummy to back. Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of baby's sleep area. Don't use pillows, blankets, quilts, sheepskins, or pillow-like crib bumpers and keep all objects away from your baby's face. This reduces the chances of SIDS.
- There is no need to breast feed your baby. Formula is much easier and the quantity can be measured more accurately.

- Today: Breast feeding is recommended but not mandatory. It builds immunities in the baby and is a wonderful way to bond with the baby. Mother and doctor can determine if the baby is thriving and receiving adequate nutrition.
- Pacifiers cause buck teeth.
 - Today: Pacifiers today are designed to fit a baby's mouth without causing mouth or teeth problems.
- If you know the parents assume their young daughter/son will be a good babysitter. Instructions are very basic and as long as you give a number for emergencies all is fine.
 - Today: It is very important to know the person and the background of the babysitter. Always ask about his/her experience. Give the babysitter specific instructions and a list of contacts and emergency numbers. Have the person over to meet the baby/children while you observe the interaction.
- A child always needs antibiotics for bad colds.
 - Today: This is definitely not true. Antibiotics are given only for bacterial infections. They do not help with viruses. But, it's always wise to talk to your medical provider if you are concerned about your child's health.
- Car seats are not that important if you hold your baby in your arms while other children may play in the back seat.
 - Today: Car seat laws are very strict and need to be followed. There are classes to teach correct methods of installing car seats and when to advance your child to the next level of car seat.

We, as well meaning grandparents or future grandparents, must do away with our old ideas on childrearing and embrace the new standards. In other words, we need to listen to our children and follow their instructions. Today's grandparents have a lot to learn. I guess we don't have all the answers after all.

Submitted by,

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If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Washington County Child Protection Citizen Review Panel, see the Washington County website at www.co.washington.mn.us/childprotectioncrp
Or, call Don Pelton, Community Services Supervisor, at 651-430-6631.