

Helping Hands

FQ'S PANEL OF EXPERTS ON ALL MATTERS RELATING TO FATHERHOOD

ARE AT HAND TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS AND ANSWER ANY BURNING QUESTIONS YOU HAVE

MEET THIS ISSUE'S EXPERTS



Dr Rob Hicks

London-based GP



Jenni Trent-Hughes

Expert on the newly launched parenting tool www.bedwettingbuddy.com



Becky Goddard-Hill

Author, *How To Afford Time Off With Your Baby* (Vermillion Books) www.babybudgeting.co.uk



Dawn Jackson Blatner

Nutritionist and author of *The Flexitarian Diet* (McGraw Hill)



Sue Beever

Author, *Happy Kids Happy You* (Crown House) www.happykids-happyyou.co.uk



A baby with colic can prove exhausting for parents

Q. We have an almost three-month-old son whose colic and sleep patterns are seriously depriving my wife and I of sleep. It's affecting our relationship and my work. What advice can you give me?

Paul F, Manchester

"Looking after a colicky baby can be exhausting. It's important that you and your wife are reassured that your son is well, will not come to any long-term harm, and the colic he's experiencing is not because you are doing anything wrong. Colic traditionally occurs in the evening although it can happen at any time in the day and sometimes even twice a day. There are many ways to try and relieve colic including gentle rocking and swaying movement, tummy massage, background humming sounds such as those from a washing machine or vacuum cleaner, car drives, infant colic drops (Infacol), or Colief

that contains lactase enzyme which helps breakdown lactose in feeds, the belief being that for some babies colic may be due to a transient lactase enzyme deficiency. It's vital that you both take care of yourselves too, something that many parents don't do, or feel guilty for doing. You need to have regular breaks to recharge your own batteries so you can cope with your son's crying and enjoy being parents. So ask family and friends for support and don't feel ashamed in doing so, most parents have to ask for help at some time and fully understand what you're going through as colic is so common they've probably been through it themselves. Moreover, be reassured that colic is a temporary problem and is usually over by the time a baby reaches three months old. CRY-SIS is a support organisation for families with excessively crying and sleepless children. You can contact them on 08451 228 669, or visit www.cry-sis.org.uk." **Dr RH**



Q. We're due to spend a week visiting grandparents this Christmas with our five-year-old who is still wetting the bed at night, which is sure to cause a few problems. Is there any advice you can offer? *Ben L, Norfolk*

"Christmas is the highpoint of the year for most five-year-olds and yours will be no different. What a shame it would be to lose any of that wide-eyed wonder and magic by focusing on this issue. Please don't be like the parents I once had who had decided to tell their child, "If you stop wetting the bed before Christmas then Santa will bring you a Playstation." The carrot and stick approach might work with brushing your teeth but it isn't appropriate with bedwetting and the last thing you need is to add more pressure to an already pressurised situation. As far as the practicalities go: pack protective



bed mats, two small flat sheets, two bath towels and a few bin bags. Layer one of each of these on the bed before bedtime and if there is an accident in the night you have a spare set to repeat the process while bundling the soiled items, including pyjamas, into one of the binbags. In the morning take the lot down to the washing machine and discretely handle it. Alternatively, absorbent nightwear such as DryNites is available that can be worn underneath pyjamas and cater for four- to seven-year-olds. It is also a good idea before you go to have a quiet word with the grandparents, out of earshot of your child of course. Explain that you (as in you not them!) may be doing some extra laundry while you are there – grandparents usually just want everyone to be happy and will be willing to go along with anything that will help make Christmas special for the young ones. Merry Christmas and to all a year of dry nights!" **JTH**

Q. We've an 18-month-old boy and another on the way. We're looking at ways to rein-in the expense this Xmas – any ideas? *JT, London*

"Christmas can be scary when you are trying to control your cash-flow. But there are plenty of simple ways to rein in the expense. For starters remember that Christmas trees and toddlers can be disastrous! Get yourself a small artificial tree that can be placed out of reach. It will only cost you this year and then not again, saving you a fortune in the long-run. I tell anyone who asks EXACTLY what my children would like including practical gifts such as swimming lessons or Peppa Pig PJ's. It saves me having to find the money elsewhere and is much appreciated. Making gifts for others is fun and frugal. Laminated drawings from your child to grandparents will be adored, a group family photo delights, as do homemade biscuits or handprint mugs. Creativity saves pounds. Saying a big YES to any invitation for Christmas lunch reduces stress, shopping and spending and you can leave whenever you want. A pot of bulbs to say thanks costs nothing in comparison to catering. Make Your Christmas about traditions not things. For example, you could light a special candle on Christmas day, go to a local nativity service, leave a carrot for Rudolph or donate unwanted toys to a children's charity. Money doesn't make memories. The magic of a happy family and a new baby most certainly will." **BG**

Q. My wife is a vegetarian and wants to raise the child we're expecting as a vegetarian too. Is this safe? What should she do once our baby is eating solids to ensure they get the right mix of foods? *David, Pembrokeshire*

"It is safe for people of all ages to be vegetarian – even very young toddlers. A well-planned vegetarian diet can be one of the healthiest ways for adults and children to eat as long as special attention is paid to getting enough protein, iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin D, B12, and omega-3 fatty acids. In addition to breast-milk or formula, around 6 months old your child will be ready to try solid foods. The

first couple of months focus on gradually trying iron-fortified rice/oat/barley cereal, vegetables, and fruits. At about eight months you can try more vegetarian protein sources such as pureed beans, lentils, peas, and tofu for additional protein, iron and zinc. At 12 months, whole milk and yogurt can be introduced which will give valuable calcium, vitamin D and B12. After one year your toddler's diet should be very similar to what your vegetarian wife eats." **DJB**

Q. We're moving house and moving our children 6 and 10 to new schools. Both have said they're 'scared' of what will happen – what can I do to make things easier for them? *Rhod, Suffolk*

"Change can be challenging for all of us – adults and children alike – so it's natural that they feel apprehensive about the move. Acknowledge their feelings and give them the opportunity to talk about anything specific that might be worrying them. I talk about the importance of joining our children in 'their world', seeing situations through their eyes. It may be that this raises some topics that you will want to follow up; perhaps visiting the school again with your children or reassuring them of ways they can sustain their existing friendships. Once your children have talked through their fears, introduce positive examples – perhaps a child that joined their old school and integrated well – and focus on the exciting new opportunities the new school will bring. A common technique used in neuro linguistic programming encourages us to project into the future and sense how we will enjoy a particular outcome. Help your children to imagine how they will feel when they are properly settled in the new school and have made new friends. This will help you to take steps in the here and now towards achieving this outcome. And finally, it really helps to show empathy with your children by talking about aspects of the move that make you a little 'scared'. They will be reassured by having the chance to support you and will be more open to receiving support themselves." **SB**

NEW DAD RULES: FENDING OFF THE BABY BLUES



Around 60% of men report feeling blue in the first few months of becoming a dad. Fortunately, father, GP and expert on BBC's Knowitalls Dr Ayan Panja is on hand to help. "There are many reasons for why new fathers suffer the 'baby blues' too," says Panja. "It could be doubts about being a good dad, adjusting to the routine involved in looking after baby, not being able to spend as much time with your partner who is initially pre-occupied with

being a full time mum, fear of not being able to provide financially, loss of freedom, poor sleep etc." Men are also notorious for keeping their emotions in, so Panja's rule number one is:

- 👉 Talk about it. Chat to your partner, your friends. "Or go and see your GP if you feel low for more than two weeks who may refer you to a talking therapy or discuss medication," says Panja.
- 👉 Make time. For your family but also as a couple once a week... even if it's an hour you need time together with your partner.
- 👉 Take turns. "Make sure both you and your partner get enough sleep and rest," adds Panja.
- 👉 Acknowledge the problem. If you're struggling to sleep, feeling irritable and low, and think you might be depressed, don't let it fester, take action.
- 👉 Keep healthy. Avoid alcohol, take more exercise and consider an omega-3 supplement to stave off the blues.

1Dr Ayan Panja - www.ayanpanja.com