



Doctors, Dentists, and School Nurses Say:

Slather 'em in sunscreen.

"Eighty percent of sun damage occurs before the age of 18," says Jody Levine, a pediatric dermatologist in New York City. Later in life, it shows up as wrinkles and skin cancer. "Apply sunscreen during your morning routine. It doesn't have to be sunny for people to wear sunscreen, as damaging rays are always shining, even through window glass," she says.

Go low-carb in the morning.

"Make kids eat a real breakfast, not a sweet breakfast," says Judy Bearman, the nurse at St. Mary's Episcopal School, in Memphis. "The simple carbohydrates in doughnuts, strudels, and juice enter the bloodstream quickly, giving them energy but leaving them groggy by 9 A.M. I see so many stomachaches in my office mid-morning, and the kids are just hungry" Ideally, children should get protein (like a scrambled egg) and some fat (at least 2 percent milk) to keep them full until lunch.

Don't share all the gory details.

When it comes to possibly unpleasant situations, like getting a shot or pulling a tooth, "give children only as much information as they can handle," says Hope Zimmerman Waxman, a pediatric dentist in New York City "Kids get anxious when you present too much detail. We might say, 'You have to come back to wash a tooth' or, of a shot, 'It's like a mosquito bite.'"

A mild fever is no reason to panic.

"Parents have fever phobia, where they look at a number, not at the child," says Stephanie Freilich, a pediatrician in New York City. "If your child is older than two months, a low fever in and of itself is not dangerous. It's the body's way of fighting something." (For children under two months, consult your doctor, because different rules apply.) There is no need to rush to the ER when the mercury inches above 98.6. But you should be concerned if your child also has severe diarrhea, is vomiting, or appears lethargic.

Don't offer a kids' menu at home.

"The child needs to adapt to the parents, not vice versa," says Peter Waldstein, a pediatrician in Beverly Hills. "Parents say to me, 'I make dinner and little Johnny doesn't eat it, so I make him a grilled cheese.' I guarantee if you don't make the grilled cheese, he'll eat dinner. Every child has an appetite."



Therapists, Behavioral Experts, and Psychologists Say:

Don't compare your kid with Chatty Cathy. "Many parents come in and say, 'All of my friends' children are speaking,' and worry because theirs aren't," says Steven Blaustein, Ph.D., a speech and language pathologist in New York City. Speech and language skills develop at different times for different kids. "And a number of factors go into it. I don't expect a two-year-old to master S, L, or R."

Sure, some can, but that doesn't mean they should all be doing it," Blaustein says.

Taking scissors to her own bangs isn't the real problem.

When your child acts defiantly chopping off her hair, answering only to "Shirley"—a parent's instinct may be to home in on the behavior rather than the reason behind it. "In most cases, the behavior is usually just your child's attempt at solving a problem," says Brad Sachs, Ph.D., a family psychologist in Columbia, Maryland, and the author of *The Good Enough Child* (Harper Paperbacks, \$15). "It is the best solution she's come up with." Instead of lashing out over the haircut, ask probing questions that get to the heart of how she's feeling. Maybe self-esteem is the issue, not an urge for a bob.

Don't fight his pint-size battles.

"If your child talks about being bullied, don't immediately become the lioness, ready to confront the other child's parents. Let your child tell the story and simply say, 'Whoa!' or 'Wow!'" says Wendy Mogel, a psychologist and the author of *The Blessing or a Skinned Knee* (Penguin, \$14). Then ask what the child did about it and suggest strategies. "Barring physical or deep psychological harm, don't do your child's bidding for him. If he doesn't learn from an early age how to resolve his conflicts, how is he going to fare later in life?" says Mogel.

Conquer molehills, not mountains.

"Give your child little challenges so he sees himself as capable and effective," says Alison Frungillo, a therapist in Madison, New Jersey. "Let him tour the school before his first day or meet a counselor before camp. It builds self-confidence, especially in kids who suffer from separation anxiety."