

practical pediatrics

DR FARBER SAYS

Plain talk about office practices

This month I share some observations on office practices and provide useful websites for patient care.

1 If a child has had severe respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), or a febrile seizure, the parents will be very worried the next time their child is ill. Acknowledge this fear, let them know what to watch for, and assure them that after a few benign illnesses, and seeing that their child does well, they will be less anxious in the future.

2 For night terrors, scheduled awakenings can be of benefit. After determining when the terrors are likely to occur, the parent can awaken the child shortly before the expected time, for several nights in a row. This apparently interrupts the cycle and can relieve the problem.¹

3 Showing parents reliable images online of what you are diagnosing (eg, urate crystals in the diaper) or not diagnosing (the actual rash of erythema chronicum migrans when the family is worried about Lyme disease) is very helpful.

4 Infants and young children are much smarter than we are in some ways. Thus, an adult who has hurt his neck might try to convince his doctor that he is not really hurt, but not so for youngsters. If a child is moving his or her neck freely after an injury, he or she has not suffered a serious spinal injury, and will not need x-rays.

5 The Oralflo cup (Oralflo Technologies; Raritan, New Jersey), or others, can be useful for helping children to swallow pills.

6 TGuard, formerly ThumbGuard, devices (MED et al, Incorporated; Matthews, North Carolina) can be useful for thumb-sucking. Bitter-tasting products that are applied to the thumb seem less likely to work, unless the child is motivated to stop. That is, they appear to operate more as a reminder to take the thumb out, rather than as an actual deterrent.

7 I post tidbits about children where they can be seen whenever I open the chart. Examples of items that might go here include how to pronounce names, the child's accomplishments/interests, if the family brought me homegrown tomatoes, and if a parent has a medical condition. Electronic health records have an easy way to do this.

8 Update your equipment when needed. Stethoscopes develop cracks that can interfere with listening. The MacroView otoscope (Welch Allyn; Skaneateles Falls, New York) is vastly superior to the ones of the previous generation.

REFERENCE

1. Frank NC, Spirito A, Stark L, Owens-Stivley J. The use of scheduled awakenings to eliminate childhood sleepwalking. *J Pediatr Psychol.* 1997;22(3):345-353.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Here are various websites that clinicians might find helpful for information to pass along to patients and their families.

US Department of Health and Human Services:
Stopping smoking
www.smokefree.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: New drivers
www.cdc.gov/parentsarethey

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:
Car safety
www.safercar.gov

US Department of Agriculture: Obesity/nutrition—a useful website, especially for children aged 6-12 y
www.choosemyplate.gov/kids

CredibleMeds: Drug interactions/long QT
www.crediblemeds.org

American Academy of Pediatrics: Guidelines for using media
www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx

Center for Young Women's Health: General and specific health issues for teenaged girls (eg, PCOS)
www.youngwomenshealth.org

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