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WHAT DERN MOMS KNOW

Our mothers may have done things differently when we were little, but expert advice has changed a lot between then and now.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENNY RISHER

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Look at your childhood photos, and you'll probably notice more than funky clothes and hairstyles,

including some potentially sobering images of what was considered appropriate child-rearing. Whether the Kodak moment captures you sleeping face-down in a pile of pillows or riding in the front of Dad's Camaro, you might be wondering, "What were my parents thinking?"

Rest assured: Those pics aren't evidence that your parents were neglectful. They just didn't know any better! Expert health and safety guidelines have evolved. And while telling that to your parents or in-laws might not be easy, it will be unavoidable, because you'll probably notice plenty of ways that their advice differs from what your pediatrician recommends. In honor of the 85th anniversary of *Parents*, we've rounded up the most significant changes from the past few decades that all your child's caregivers should know about.

ROAD RULES

When Chicago mom Gelasia Croom was prepping for the birth of her twins, her mother didn't understand why she had ordered her infant car seats so far in advance. "She figured we would just hold them on our lap during the ride home from the hospital," Croom says. "I thought she was kidding!"

Safety seats are no joke; they cut an infant's risk of dying in a motor-vehicle crash by 71 percent. (Still, crashes remain the leading cause of death among kids ages 1 to 12 in the U.S.) No wonder every state now has child-restraint laws (visit ghsa.org for local requirements). The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that kids ride in a rear-facing safety seat until they reach the maximum weight or height allowed by the safety seat's manufacturer; a forward-facing seat until they outgrow it (often between 40 and 80 pounds); and a booster seat until they're at least 4'9". All kids should ride in the backseat until age 13.

Bye-Bye, Baby Products

These items may have been commonplace in your childhood home, but these days the experts advise keeping them far away from your own infant.

WALKERS Pediatricians have been seeking a ban on the manufacture and sale of mobile infant walkers since 1995. Studies show babies using them can be seriously injured or killed, especially if they fall down the stairs. Plus they may cause walking delays.

BABY ASPIRIN 30 years ago, the CDC began warning about an association between Reye's syndrome and the use of aspirin to treat kids with chicken pox and the flu. Today, doctors warn that no kid should take baby aspirin; give acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

MERCURY THERMOMETERS If one breaks, you risk mercury exposure, which can damage the nervous system. In 2001, experts advised families and doctors to stop using them. Visit earth911.com for info on disposing of ones in your home.

Some things never change, like a mom's love for her child.



For maximum safety, have your seat installation checked by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician at a permanent inspection station (visit safekids.org for locations), since it's estimated that nearly three out of four parents use car seats incorrectly. Also, be sure to tighten the straps on the five-point harness every time you buckle up, and don't buy a used seat unless you're certain that it hasn't been in a crash or recalled, says Karen Aldana, spokeswoman for the NHTSA. Finally, register your seat so you'll receive an alert if it's ever recalled.

SNOOZE CLUES

After giving birth to her daughter, Ila, in January 2010, Jessica Katz, of Santa Monica, California, was grateful that her mother came to help out. Still, she was taken aback that her mom wanted to put Ila on her tummy to sleep, a position that poses a suffocation risk. "My mom hadn't heard about 'back to sleep' and sarcastically said, 'I had no idea I was killing you by putting you on your tummy all that time,'" Katz recalls. Her mom was simply following the guidelines of her generation. "A primary concern then was that babies would choke if they spit up while on their back," says Christopher Greeley, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Texas Health

Science Center at Houston. It wasn't until the mid-'80s that studies began linking other positions—especially stomach-sleeping—to higher rates of SIDS. In 1992, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advised against tummy-sleeping, and two years later it began urging caregivers to place babies to sleep on their back. Doctors also stressed the importance of removing soft bedding and toys from cribs. Since then, SIDS rates have dropped by more than 50 percent.

GOOD EATS

Nourishing a child has always been critical—but the how and when of feeding hasn't been as enduring. For instance, the number of U.S. moms who attempt to breastfeed (75 percent) has more than tripled since sinking to an all-time low of 24 percent in 1971. "My mom, who formula-fed me, was amazed at my breastfeeding experience," says Cathy Hale, of Austin. "Her doctors never mentioned the benefits; she wondered how I could tell how much my son was eating. She even encouraged me to quit when it got challenging!"

Back in the disco days, nursing seemed archaic and inconvenient compared with using formula. But in the past 20 years, studies emerged documenting how breastfeeding transfers important antibodies to a baby, triggers the release of hormones in moms that help ward off baby blues, and helps reduce the risk of breast and ovarian cancer—just a few reasons why the AAP recommends that mothers breastfeed exclusively until a baby is 6 months old and continue for at least one year.

Infants also used to first try solids at 6 weeks. "My mom and my mother-in-law encouraged me to put rice cereal in Ila's bottle to help her sleep," Katz recalls. Today, experts say you should never put solids in a baby's bottle. While the AAP recognizes most babies are ready to eat solid foods at 4 to 6 months, a recent study found that kids who were given solids before 4 months were worse sleepers than those who weren't. And some research suggests a link between the early introduction of solids and obesity later in life. "Babies don't need the extra calories," says *Parents* advisor Wendy Sue Swanson, M.D., a pediatrician with the The Everett Clinic in the Seattle area. "Aside from a vitamin D supplement, they get complete nutrition from breast milk or formula."

Another food revolution: Moms now honor their baby's internal hunger cues and usually feed them on demand (in the past, they were kept on a strict schedule). "Kids know when they're hungry," notes Dr. Swanson. "The more you mess with that, the more you mess up their inborn healthy-eating habits."

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IMMUNIZATION NATION

Remember how scary it was to go to the doctor for a booster shot? Be brave for your baby: The current immunization schedule recommends that a child may receive up to 23 shots by age 2 (that's three times as many as were recommended in 1983). "My mom came with me to my baby's 2-month checkup; when she saw how many injections he was getting, she was shocked," Dr. Swanson admits. "I had to support *her*."

Still, all those needle pricks are a testament to how much we've learned. In 1983, by school age children were only immunized against measles, mumps, and rubella (the MMR shot); diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (the DTP shot); and polio. Today, additional vaccines include varicella (chicken pox), hepatitis B, *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib), influenza, and pneumococcal disease. (Visit parents.com/vaccination-schedule for an up-to-date immunization schedule.) "There are more shots, but they deliver fewer antigens and have fewer side effects than they did 30 years ago," Dr. Swanson notes.

DOLING OUT DISCIPLINE

Not long ago, many believed that to "spare the rod" was to "spoil the child." As recently as 1998, the AAP reported that 90 percent of U.S. parents spanked their kids at some time. That year, the organization advised against corporal punishment, citing research linking spanking with increased aggression in children, as well as anger-management

issues, spousal abuse, violence, and substance abuse in adulthood. Laura Wellington, of Ridgewood, New Jersey, can attest to the damage of being spanked as a child: "When making a mistake leads to being hurt by the people you love, it's difficult to trust anyone. I had to work through a lot of issues as an adult." Wellington has never spanked any of her own five children. "Because I am loving but firm and consistent, they know that when I say 'No' the issue ends there," she says.

Today, spanking is less politically correct, but according to a recent *Pediatrics* study, nearly 80 percent of preschool kids have been disciplined in this manner. "As parents realize there are more effective ways to manage behavior, this will change; corporal punishment may eventually even be outlawed," says Dr. Greeley. It's just another example of how shifts in thinking change over generations, ultimately improving the health, safety, and well-being of our children. □



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