



Stork Health Tips

Sleep, Parenting, and Culture

In so many different aspects, childrearing and parenting is based on what we have learned from our parents raising us, and the norms of the culture in which we were raised. In the multi-cultural society in which we live, this leads to a wide variation of home rules, parenting practices, and child-parent interactions, even in the same neighborhood.

The issue of how families create, nurture, and implement bedtimes, sleep routines, and sleep environments is an important example of this diversity. In "Mother's Corner" of this website, one

mother noted that she was regularly criticized by well-meaning individuals for allowing her son to sleep with her and her husband. Yet, she cherished the time spent with her son, and one can infer that he did as well. Was it wrong for her to have everyone in one bed? I suspect that most pediatricians and marriage counselors would frown on this practice. Yet, the family unit was likely functioning well and strong bonds were reinforced.

It is standard and reasonable advice in our society to have children in their own bed. It allows the marital bed to remain

intact, and it creates healthy sleep habits for our children. Yet, there are many countries where the cultural norm is for the child to be in bed with the parents. Economic issues also play a significant role. If "home" is a one room place, having more than one bed is impractical.

The important point is that a loving and nurturing environment is the paramount issue. Ignore others who may criticize you and your spouse in regard to your sleep routines. If everyone is sleeping-well, and if family interactions are solid, you are indeed a good parent!

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Family sleep tips

- A night in bed with Mom and Dad can be used as a reward for excellent behavior.
- Never search for the "Monster" your child fears, as this confirms for your child that a monster exists. If your child needs you to look in the closet or under the bed, then you should do it, but not to prove that the monster is not there, but rather to emphasize that monsters do not exist.
- If you do allow your child to share your bed regularly, extra attention and effort needs to be made as a couple to maintain your emotional and physical intimacy.
- Sleep need changes with age. Always allow for an age appropriate amount of sleep opportunity.

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