

# CHILD SAFETY BLOG

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Toll Free: **888.625.6635**  
(888.MaloneLaw)

Local: **202.742.1500**



## Pediatricians repeating medical myths endanger child safety

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Parents who turn to their child's pediatrician for health and safety advice may end up hearing recycled parenting myths, a new study reports.

"In some cases, a child's well-being may be seriously compromised if parents are given misinformation by a pediatrician based on these misconceptions and old wives' tales," said Andrew Adesman, M.D., lead investigator of the study and chief of developmental and behavioral pediatrics at the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York.

Patrick A. Malone  
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.  
1331 H Street N.W.  
Suite 902  
Washington, DC 20005

[pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com](mailto:pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com)  
[www.patrickmalonelaw.com](http://www.patrickmalonelaw.com)  
202-742-1500  
202-742-1515 (fax)

The study was based on a questionnaire sent to a national sample of board-certified primary-care pediatricians and included a mix of 34 myths and 14 true statements. Analysis of more than 1,000 responses indicated that the majority of pediatricians (76 percent) mistakenly endorsed one or more of the parenting myths as being true, and 13 percent got three or more wrong.

Although most of the myths are benign old wives' tales, Adesman said, there were a "dangerous dozen" health beliefs that reflected outdated parenting beliefs that could pose a risk to a child's safety or well-being. For example:

- 33 percent said a burn can be treated with an application of ice. Risk: Ice can also cause injury to the skin.
- 33 percent said it is safe to put a baby to sleep on his or her side. Risk: Crib death -- also known as sudden infant death syndrome. (All babies need to sleep on their backs.)
- 5 percent said children can be given an ice bath to treat a fever. Risk: Hypothermia.
- 5 percent said children over age 6 can be given aspirin for a fever. Risk: Reye's syndrome.
- 5 percent said it's OK to place a soft object in a child's mouth during a seizure. Risk: Dental injury to the child, hand injury to the adult.
- 3 percent said babies younger than six months can be given honey. Risk: Botulism poisoning.

Many pediatricians also endorsed less dangerous myths.. For example:

- 15 percent said children should not swim until 30 minutes after eating.
- 17 percent said vitamin C helps ward off colds.
- 16 percent said eating carrots improves a child's vision.
- 8 percent said eating chocolate causes acne.
- 11 percent said listening to Mozart makes a baby smarter.
- 7 percent said reading in the dark causes visual problems.
- 11 percent said sugar causes hyperactivity.

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- 7 percent said sitting too close to the TV damages vision.
- 9 percent said sleeping with a nightlight causes nearsightedness.

Source: [Los Altos Town Crier](#) You can view the complete study [here](#).

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