Beyond Dr. Google, Today’s Parent magazine, 2011

By Karan Smith

Book stores are overflowing with health titles; Dr. Google is only a click away. But who can you trust when your baby has a fever or your preschooler just won’t eat? We polled health experts across the country and uncovered six books and sites they rely on:

**AboutKidsHealth.ca**

**The details:** This website from Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children is reliable, far-reaching and pretty addictive. You log on intending to research allergies and end up exploring the layers of the brain in a clickable guide. Who knew the cerebellum controls actions such as playing the piano?

**The scope:** With 3,000 pages of content and an extensive A to Z health guide, there’s a lot of information for parents and much aimed at kids too, such as Mindi & Mark’s Monster Mythblasters: “The Case of the Body Changers.”

**Big draw:** The site explores bigger issues from family meals to tween swearing and seeks answers outside the hospital too: A video interview with comics legend Stan Lee, for instance, takes a second look at disabilities. Is ADHD a secret superpower?

**Bonus:** As the site says: Child-friendly health information makes kids healthier.

**CaringforKids.cps.ca**

**The details:** This site gives you all the facts, plain and simple, backed up by Canada’s 2,000-plus paediatricians. While it lacks online pizzazz, it makes up for it with an easy-to-read format, presented in a calm manner. Kind of a like a good doctor.

**The scope:** The information runs from colic and car seat safety to positive discipline and vegetarian diets. Every fact-sheet is reviewed on a regular basis, so you know it’s current.

**Big draw:** The “When your Child is Sick” section covers topics that send most of us clicking: Is that pinkeye? What are the symptoms of pinworms? And what should we know about antibiotics?

**Bonus:** It offers a ton of links to reputable health sites.

**Caring for Your Child from Birth to Age Five**

**The details:** For parents who prefer a book to a bookmarked site, this manual from The Canadian Paediatric Society shares the “collective wisdom” of Canada’s paediatricians.

**The scope:** This book covers everything: feeding, physical and emotional milestones, health, nutrition and injury prevention. It’s handy if you have more than one kid, so you can look up, say, iron needs for eight-month-olds and self-confidence issues for your five-year-old.

**Big draw:** The “Guide to Common Illnesses” is something you can revisit through all those ear infections and strange rashes. And throughout, a handy feature helps you do triage: “Make a Note, Make an Appointment or Go to the Hospital?”

**Bonus:** The book aims to help parents regain their confidence, chipped away by all those shows and sites teaching us how to parent, says Dr. Diane Sacks, the book editor (and a columnist for this magazine). “No one knows your child as well as you do, and your instincts are almost always right,” says Dr. Sacks.

**How to Get Your Kid to Eat … But Not Too Much**

**The details:** There are countless books about pureeing carrots and cooking with kids. This isn’t one of them. Considered the “bible of feeding kids,” this original output from therapist and dietician Ellyn Satter establishes the point she’s made in successive books: It’s not about what you serve, it’s about the eating relationship we have with our kids.

**The scope:** This book covers basic feeding principles and offers tips on how to avoid food fights from birth through adolescence. There are also helpful tips on issues from picky eaters to weight issues.

**Big draw:** Her mantra: Parents are responsible for what (and when) kids eat; children are responsible for how much they eat.

**Bonus:** She helps you believe a basic fact: Kids are born knowing their own cues for hunger, appetite and satiety.

**Prescription for Nutritional Healing**

**The details:** This best-selling book by the late “nutritional healing pioneer” Phyllis Balch provides an alternative outlook on health issues.

**The scope:** While “elements of health” are investigated from diet to air quality, the lion’s share of the book is about understanding and treating health issues through natural remedies. It’s not limited to children, but you will find common topics here from autism and allergies to bed-wetting and the common cold.

**Big draw:** The book offers in-depth information in an easy-to-read manner. For instance, with attention deficit disorder, it explains symptoms; suggests supplements, such as calcium and magnesium, which can have a calming effect; and offers other dietary recommendations.

**Bonus:** At 800-plus pages it indeed feels like the “bible of natural health.” It’s also continually updated.

**The Mother of All Baby Books**

**The details:** This guide by Canadian parenting author Ann Douglas offers a supportive, information-packed overview to that first crazy, wonderful year.

**The scope:** A few chapters are devoted to preparing for the baby and once the star arrives, the book runs the gamut from recognizing the startle reflex to taking your little one’s temperature. The top 10 emotional changes of parenthood are also covered (sleep deprivation anyone?)

**Big draw:** The “Owner’s Manual” covers all the basics with handy tips. For example, when changing a diaper, quickly move the soiled output away from his bottom before he sticks a foot in it.

**Bonus:** “Mom’s the Word” shares tips from parents on everything from your postpartum body to surviving the return to work.

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**Sidebar: First Aid Finder**

Two organizations offer a wide range of first-aid courses across the country: St. John Ambulance ([www.sja.ca](http://www.sja.ca)) and the Canadian Red Cross (redcross.ca), which works with local training partners. Here’s what they recommend for parents:

**Emergency Level First Aid:** This is a one-day course from St. John Ambulance. It covers life-threatening emergencies: choking, CPR and severe bleeding, teaching you things that are going to make a difference in the next five minutes. (Course content varies depending on where you are in Canada.)

**Emergency Child Care First Aid:** This is a one-day course from Red Cross that’s ideal for stay-at-home parents. It covers everything from preventing injuries (car seat safety, good toy choices) to recognizing illnesses (measles, croup and so on). Other topics include basic CPR techniques and how to respond to choking and possible poisoning.

**We Can Help:** Why limit the life-saving skills to the grown-ups? This St. John Ambulance class, usually organized through schools or youth groups, is designed for children ages seven to 10. Topics covered include breathing emergencies, choking, bleeding, poisoning and burns.

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**The experts:**

Dr. Michael Dickinson, a paediatrician in Miramichi, N.B., and member of the Canadian Paediatric Society’s public education advisory committee

Patricia Chuey, (www.patriciachuey.com), a consulting dietitian, based in Vancouver

Debbie Allen, ([healthonearth.ca](http://www.healthonearth.ca)), a homeopathic physician and registered holistic nutritionist based in Aurora, ON; teaches at the Toronto School of Homeopathic Medicine

Mary Anne Howse, manager of library services at Women’s College Hospital in Toronto and co-chair of the Consumer Health Information Providers Interest Group