



MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

www.midjerseypeds.com

**33 Brunswick Woods Drive
East Brunswick, NJ 08816
(732) 257-4330**

**25 Kilmer Drive
Building #3, Suite 107
Morganville, NJ 07751
(732) 972-6888**

NIGHT TERRORS

Night Terrors are an inherited disorder in which a child usually, 1-8 years old, tends to have dreams during the night from which he/she is difficult to awaken. They occur in 21% of children and are usually not caused by psychological stress. Being over tired can trigger night terrors, so be sure your child goes to bed at a reasonable time.

Symptoms:

- Your child is frightened but cannot be awakened or comforted.
- He is agitated and may sit up or run helplessly about, possibly screaming or talking wildly.
- Although his/her eyes are wide open and staring, he/she looks right through you, and does not realize you are there.
- The episode lasts from 10 - 30 minutes
- He/she cannot remember the episode in the morning.

Course:

Night Terrors usually occur within 2 hours of bedtime. They are harmless and each episode will end on its own accord in deep sleep. They tend to occur in clusters, lasting 1-2 months at a time. The problem usually disappears by age 12 or sooner.

Treatment:

- Try to help your child return to normal sleep. You won't be able to awaken him easily, so don't try. Turn on the lights so that your child is less confused by shadows. Make soothing comments such as "You are all right". Speak slowly and repetitively. Hold your child only if it seems to help your child feel better. There is no way to abruptly shorten the episode. Shaking your child may cause him to become more agitated and it will only prolong the attack.
- If you have baby-sitters, explain to them what a Night Terror is and what to do if it happens.