

SG Help your child to sleep



If you need further information please
contact your Health Care Practitioner

Tel:

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emergency (24 hours a day, 365 days a year) or
go to **NHS Choices** at www.nhs.uk for more
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Sleep Guide for children and young people

What you need to do to help him sleep well

While each child is different, the following chart gives an idea of the typical amount of sleep needed at different ages. You will note that not only does the number of hours of sleep your child requires vary according to age, but also the total daytime sleep is much longer in babies, especially in the first 6 months.

In babies and young children the total hours of sleep would typically divide up into a number of naps per day and the overnight sleep.

By totalling up the number of hours your child is currently sleeping, you can use the chart to see if you are being reasonable in the number of hours you are expecting him to sleep. These figures are only as a guide and gives average figures at different ages. Each child is different and may vary slightly from the figures given below.

Typical sleep requirements from birth to teenage

Age	Total duration per 24 hr cycle	Night sleep	Day sleep
Birth	16½ hrs	8½ hrs	8hrs (4 naps)
6 months	14 hrs	10½ hrs	3½hrs (2 naps)
12 months	13½ hrs	11½ hrs	2hrs (2 naps)
2 years	13 hrs	11½ hrs	1½hrs (1 nap)
5 years	11 hrs	11 hrs	No naps
10 years	9½ hrs	9½ hrs	No naps
15 years	9 hrs	9 hrs	No naps

Bed time routine

A bed time routine teaches infants and children an order of events leading to bedtime. It is a period of progressive settling down.

A regular and consistent bedtime routine is necessary to ensure your child falls asleep at the desired time and gets enough sleep. Choose a routine which suits you and your child. You may choose to include bath time, changing into pyjamas, having a drink, reading a story, or singing.

The sleeping environment

It helps to make a child's bedroom a safe, calm and pleasant place for the child to be in. Avoid too much furniture, stimulating toys and electronic devices such as TV and play-stations. If the bedroom is too light, use 'black out' curtains or blinds. If it is too dark, use a night light. Make sure that your child thinks of the bedroom as a comfortable and relaxing place.

Try not to send him to the bedroom during the day as a punishment as this might make him associate the bedroom with anxiety and punishment.



The settling routine

Bedtime should be at the same time each evening when your child is beginning to get tired. Anywhere between 6.00 and 8.00 pm is reasonable. The routine should be in the same order each evening. It should last approximately 30 minutes. Anyone putting him to bed should follow the routine. Do not start a routine if he is ill, at holiday times or if there are family stresses. Thinking about what could go wrong and planning is important to ensure that you are able to persist with your plan once you start. Examples of possible problems include ideas of how the other children in the house can be kept occupied so that they do not upset the plans.

You may need to consider informing neighbours within earshot who may get disturbed. If your child is not used to a routine, expect protests and tantrums when you start. Be calm, firm and consistent. Within a few days he will know you mean business and follow your routine.

For babies and infants 6 months and over



- Follow calm preparation for night routine, washing, and nappy changing.
- Put your baby into the cot while he is awake so that he learns to associate his tired feeling with being secure in the cot.
- Do not put him to sleep with a bottle.
- Dim light and say "Good night, go to sleep".
- You should not rock or cuddle him to sleep because if he wakes in the night he will expect you to be there to cuddle or rock him to sleep.
- Leave the room whilst he is still awake and let him learn to fall asleep by himself.
- The room must be left undisturbed from the time when he falls asleep. Avoid extra music, lights or other distractions. If your child wakes at night, he will have a familiar setting and will be able to fall back to sleep by himself.

For toddlers and older infants

- Avoid lengthy daytime naps. Naps usually are 30 to 60 minutes.
- Avoid stimulating drinks or food like chocolate and caffeine drinks e.g. colas, fizzy drinks, tea or coffee.
- About 30 minutes before bedtime tell your child bedtime will be soon. This cue allows him to finish the activity he is doing and be prepared for settling down time.
- Avoid active play during this time and choose a peaceful "winding down" activity.
- If he has previously insisted on habits, such as parent lying down next to him, explain to him that you are no longer going to do that. You are going to help him learn to sleep like "a big boy".
- Follow bathroom washing, teeth cleaning, and toilet routine.
- Go into the bedroom and close curtain/blinds.
- Tuck him into bed. Do not allow sleeping with a bottle. Read a short story of his choice for approximately 10 minutes then say good night. Dim the light and leave the room with door ajar. Leave the room while he is still awake.
- Praise him the next morning for following the bedtime routine.



Steps you should follow if your child will not settle

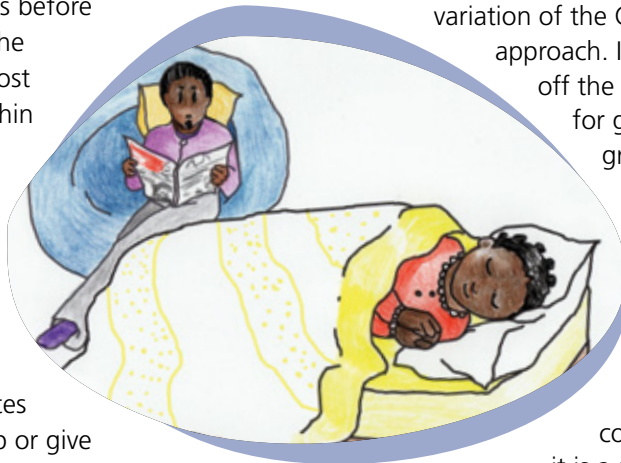
Some children can be more difficult to settle and others will have already established a bedtime pattern which requires the presence of a parent. If your child will not settle in bed by himself there are a few techniques available for you to try. The techniques are proven to work but require consistency and preparation. Every parent has their own choice of method. You need to decide which method you are comfortable with and would like to try.

Controlled self soothing (controlled crying) approach

This method involves waiting for longer periods of time before responding to your child who is unwilling to separate from you at bedtime or when he wakes at night. It is not advisable to start using this method if your child is feeling unwell. Wait until he has recovered from any illness before starting. Prepare yourself to stick to the routine for a few weeks though in most children this method is successful within a week.

These are the steps to follow

- If your child wakes in the night, wait for a couple of minutes before going in as he may well go back to sleep.
- If he is still crying after a few minutes then go to him. Do not pick him up or give a feed or start any conversation. Make sure that there isn't any obvious cause for discomfort and that he is not looking unwell.



Adjust the bed sheets if necessary and in a clear, confident loving voice say "Go back to sleep," and leave the room. If he is still crying after two or three minutes then return and repeat the process. Continue this pattern until your child is asleep. Once your child gets the message that he is not going to get any other attention, he will learn to go back to sleep by himself.

- On each subsequent night, extend the time between visits by 2 or 3 minutes. Continue the same procedure when entering the room.

Some experts feel that there may be psychological impact on a child left to cry for a prolonged period of time. It is important that you do not leave your child to cry for longer than 7 or 8 minutes at a stretch. If a couple of weeks trial has not met with success then you may want to move to the gentler Graded Leaving Approach.

The graded leaving approach

The Graded Leaving approach is a more gentle variation of the Controlled Crying approach. It gently weans your child off the need for your presence for going to sleep in a very gradual manner. For the bedtime routine, after putting him in the cot/bed, you have to slowly move away out of the room. It may take weeks to achieve but as long as you are confident and consistent, it is a successful method.

Some parents find this routine more acceptable as the distress to the child is reduced.

These are the steps for this approach

- For the first three nights, sit on a chair near your child/baby's cot/bed until he falls asleep. Do not sit on the bed itself. Do not pick him up even if he cries or wants you to. If he stands up, lay him down and say clearly "Go to sleep" in a firm, positive but loving voice. If he cries, repeat the instruction at intervals.
- If you wish you can pretend to be asleep. Close your eyes and remain as calm and undisturbed as possible.
- For the next three nights move the chair a few feet from the bed (very gradually).
- Gradually move the chair away from the bed and towards the doorway for the following three nights and repeat the same positive message that soon he won't need you when going to sleep.
- Go further and further away in 3 nightly stages – outside the door, down the hall, down the stairs. Keep reassuring your child if he cries but without moving from your chair. He should be able to hear your voice.

Night crying and the graded approach

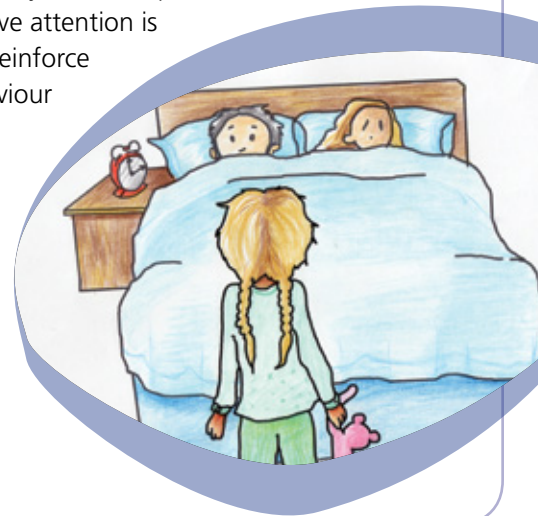
- Ideally you should not go in straight away.
- If he does not go back to sleep go, after a few minutes in to check him.
- Tell him to "go to sleep" but then sit in the last position you were in when he fell asleep.
- At intervals repeat the reassurance, "go back to sleep, Mummy/Daddy is here".
- When he is settled then return to your room.

Steps you should follow if your child gets out of bed

When young children move from sleeping in a cot to sleeping in their own bed they may need help to learn to stay in bed. Waking up in the night and coming into the parents' bed is a common problem in young children. One out of three children aged two to five get up at night on a regular basis. They may sometimes express fears of the dark, ghosts or monsters.

What you should do.

- Stay calm and return him to his own bed. Do not take him into your bed as this is likely to continue the behaviour. If necessary pick him up gently and carry him. Do this as many times as needed.
- If he comes into your room at night because he is worried about whether you are there, take him back to his room and reassure him you will be there to see him in the morning and leave the room. Be calm and firm. Do not be angry with your child or provide too much attention or long cuddles. Any excess of positive or negative attention is likely to reinforce the behaviour pattern.



- If he has nightmares, turn on the light briefly and show him how familiar their room is. Reassure him that everyone has dreams sometimes and that they are not real. Do not take him into your room to comfort him so that he can learn to handle his fears in his own bed.
- Once you have reassured him, leave the room even if he protests. Return him to his bed with reassurance if he continues to get out of bed. You might want to calmly close the door and to open it once he is in bed and quiet for two minutes.
- Consider a reward programme. Give him a sticker for each night that he stays in his own bed. Stickers can be traded in for a small treat at the end of the week.
- During the day, help your child to feel secure and loved through praise and encouragement. He might want to draw a picture of a scary dream or to come up with an alternative happy ending. You have to reassure him that dreams are not real and talk about what he has to do to get back to sleep if a dream wakes him up. For example teach him to think of a place where he feels happy and safe when he is going back to sleep. Try to have these conversations in the daytime and keep interaction down to a minimum at night.

Steps you should follow if your child wakes up too early

By the early morning hours your child will have completed most of his sleep required for the night. At this early hour the desire to sleep is less strong than at bedtime or earlier in the night.

As his sleep is much lighter at this time he may wake if there is a mild disturbance, for example, light entering the room, early rising family member, traffic noise etc. If interruptions are frequent enough, he will learn to anticipate them and may start to wake by himself or as a habit before dawn. The problems are best solved by reducing disturbing factors.

If early waking continues then delay your response to your child's waking. If he is crying and unhappy then he is still likely to be in a night time sleeping rhythm and needs to learn the habit of going back to sleep.



Go into his room, tuck him up, say "Go to sleep" reassuringly and leave the room. Return at around 7-8 minute intervals and repeat the same message. If you are consistent in doing this, after a week or so, he should start to sleep a little longer.

Do not reward early waking with milk/ bottle/drink/food, playing or by allowing your child to come into your bed. This will then become a long-term early waking habit.

Early waking can sometimes be tricky to resolve. Some children wake early despite all efforts to alter their sleep pattern. However, most can learn to sleep a little longer. If your child is already getting an adequate number of hours of sleep, then consider delaying bedtime by thirty to sixty minutes. For some parents it may be that you will have to be up earlier than you might like for a few months until your child extends his sleep pattern.

