



Children and Sleep

Sleep has become a victim of today's fast-paced world. Children need sleep to grow and develop. Let's review how much sleep is recommended:

Age	Daytime	Nighttime	Total hours
1 week*	8 - 8 1/2 hrs	9 hrs	17 - 17 1/2 hrs
1 month*	6 1/2 hrs	9 1/2 hrs	16 hrs
3 months*	5 1/2 hrs	10 1/2 hrs	16 hrs
6 months*	3 1/2 - 4 hrs	12 hrs	15 1/2 hrs - 16 hrs
12 months	3 hrs	12 1/2 hrs	15 1/2 hrs
2 years	1 1/2 - 2 hrs	12 1/2 hrs	14 - 16 hrs
3 years	1 hrs	12 hrs	13 hrs
4 years		12 1/2 hrs	12 1/2 hrs
5 years		11 1/2 - 12 hrs	11 1/2 - 12 hrs
6 to 10 years		10 to 11 hrs	10 to 11 hrs
10-13 years		8.5 to 11 hrs	8.5 to 11 hrs

*Newborns up to 4 months are establishing their sleep-wake cycle regulated by light and dark. By 6 weeks cycles begin developing and by 3 to 6 months they will become more regular.

Children can struggle with sleep, bedtime and sleeping locations for a variety of reasons. Some of the more common reasons include:

- Fear of parents leaving, the dark, ghosts and monsters
- Inability to relax without help or to recognize she is tired
- Wanting more time with a parent or caregiver
- Stress about childcare, school or schoolwork, friends and peer relationships.

Sleeping arrangements vary. The important thing is for parents to agree on an arrangement that fits the child's temperament and family lifestyle. Common sleep arrangements might include sleep sharing

in the same room or teaching self comforting habits to sleep independently in a separate room. For babies, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages sharing an adult bed and recommends having your baby in your bedroom but in a separate sleeping space next to your bed.

How parents can help children with sleeping...

Follow routines because children thrive on them. Decide what you want to include in the bedtime routine and stick with it at night from the time your child is very young and adjust as she grows older.

• For infants:

- Training a baby to sleep independently involves helping her learn how to self sooth by eliminating "sleep associations"-- those things that she can't duplicate or get for herself at night like bottle or breast, rocking with a parent, singing from a parent, etc.
- Training involves establishing a relaxing nighttime routine, then putting baby in bed when she is calm and drowsy but still awake. You may need to sit by the baby to reassure as she learns her own pattern of self-comforting. You can encourage her to suck her fingers, thumb

or pacifier and pat her back soothingly until she goes to sleep.

- When she stirs and cries during the night, it is important for you to soothe, stroke and reassure. Since the goal is to help her learn to put herself back to sleep, picking her up may slow down this process. The ease and time it takes to accomplish independent sleeping depends on her temperament and the consistency with which you encourage this independence. For children who have difficulty self soothing, having her crib in your bedroom may ease the transition.

- **For toddlers and preschoolers:**
 - Allow thirty minutes to one hour of semi-quiet activity before bed. Draw, paint, read or tell stories. You may want to start with a bath

and brushing teeth followed by a few stories, a drink of water, a trip to the bathroom, then hugs and kisses and leave the room. Children need time to wind down from the day's activities.

- Allow your child to read or play quietly in bed with a night light on to avoid the hassles that go along with demanding she immediately go to sleep in a dark room. She can drift off to sleep when ready.
- **For older children:**
 - Allow thirty minutes to one hour of semi-quiet activity before bed. Have children read books, listen to music, write in a journal or take a warm bath or shower. Save non-violent TV and video games for earlier activity in the day.

Try to stay as calm as possible while being firm about the bedtime routine. Keep in mind that parents can set the stage for sleep but cannot force children to sleep. If you are having difficulty with sleep routines or your child suffers from sleep-related issues, call your doctor or your county health department and ask for a Child Guidance professional.

Resources: *The Sleep Book for Tired Parents* by Rebecca Huntley; *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child* by Marc Weissbluth, M.D.; *Nighttime Parenting* by William Sears, M.D.; *Attachment Parenting* by Katie Allison Gran; *Your Baby Can Sleep* (video) by Stuart Tomares, M.D; *Touchpoints: The Essential Reference* by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

Child Guidance Where Families Find Solutions



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