

Sleep – Top Tips for Parents/Carers

All information taken from the NHS website. For more information see:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/sleep-problems-in-children/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrensleep/Pages/howmuchsleep.aspx>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/getting-baby-to-sleep/>



Healthy Early Years Partnership

If your child won't go to bed

- Decide what time you want your child to go to bed.
- Close to the time that your child normally falls asleep, start a 20-minute "winding down" bedtime routine. Bring this forward by 5 to 10 minutes a week – or 15 minutes if your child is in the habit of going to bed very late – until you get to the bedtime you want.
- Set a limit on how much time you spend with your child when you put them to bed. For example, read only one story, then tuck your child in and say goodnight.
- Give your child their favourite toy, dummy (if they use one) or comforter before settling into bed.
- Leave a beaker of water within reach and a dim light on if necessary.
- If your child gets up, keep taking them back to bed again with as little fuss as possible.
- Try to be consistent.
- You may have to repeat this routine for several nights.

If your child won't go to sleep without you

- This technique can help toddlers (over 12 months) or older children get used to going to sleep without you in the room.
- It can also be used whenever your child wakes in the middle of the night.
- Be prepared for your child to take a long time to settle when you first start.
- You can use strokes or pats instead of kisses if your child sleeps in a cot and you can't reach them to give them a kiss.
 - Have a regular calming bedtime routine.
 - Put your child to bed when they're drowsy, but awake and kiss them goodnight.
 - Promise to go back in a few moments to give them another kiss.
 - Return almost immediately to give a kiss.
 - Take a few steps to the door, then return immediately to give a kiss.
 - Promise to return in a few moments to give them another kiss.
 - Put something away or do something in the room then give them a kiss.
 - As long as the child stays in bed, keep returning to give more kisses.
 - Do something outside their room and return to give kisses.
 - If the child gets out of bed, say: "Back into bed and I'll give you a kiss".
 - Keep going back often to give kisses until they're asleep.
 - Repeat every time your child wakes during the night.

Sleep tips for under 5s

- Make sure you have a calming, predictable bedtime routine that happens at the same time and includes the same things every night.
- If your child complains that they're hungry at night, try giving them a bowl of cereal and milk before bed (make sure you brush their teeth afterwards).
- If your child is afraid of the dark, consider using a nightlight or leaving a landing light on.
- Don't let your child look at laptops, tablets or phones in the 30 to 60 minutes before bed – the light from screens can interfere with sleep.

- When seeing to your child during the night, be as boring as possible – leave lights off, avoid eye contact and don't talk more than necessary.
- Avoid long naps in the afternoon.

How much sleep do children under 5 need?

- Just as with adults, babies' and children's sleep patterns vary. From birth, some babies need more or less sleep than others. The list below shows the average amount of sleep babies and children need during a 24-hour period, including daytime naps.
- **1 week**
 - Most newborn babies are asleep more than they are awake. Their total daily sleep varies, but can be from 8 hours up to 16 or 18 hours. Babies will wake during the night because they need to be fed. Being too hot or too cold can also disturb their sleep.
 - daytime: 8 hours
 - night time: 8 hours 30 minutes
- **4 weeks**
 - daytime: 6 to 7 hours
 - night time: 8 to 9 hours
- **3 months**
 - As your baby grows, they'll need fewer night feeds and will be able to sleep for longer. Some babies will sleep for eight hours or longer at night, but not all. By four months, they may be spending around twice as long sleeping at night as they do during the day.
 - daytime: 4 to 5 hours
 - night time: 10 to 11 hours
- **6 months**
 - For babies aged six months to a year, night feeds may no longer be necessary and some babies will sleep for up to 12 hours at night. Teething discomfort or hunger may wake some babies during the night.
 - daytime: 3 hours
 - night time: 11 hours
- **9 months**
 - daytime: 2 hours 30 minutes
 - night time: 11 hours
- **12 months**
 - Babies will sleep for around 12 to 15 hours in total after their first birthday.
 - daytime: 2 hours 30 minutes
 - night time: 11 hours
- **2 years**
 - Most two-year-olds will sleep for 11 to 12 hours at night, with one or two naps in the daytime.
 - daytime: 1 hour 30 minutes
 - night time: 11 hours 30 minutes
- **3 years**
 - Most children aged three or four will need about 12 hours sleep, but this can range from 8 hours up to 14. Some young children will still need a nap during the day.
 - daytime: 0 to 45 minutes
 - night time: 11 hours 30 minutes to 12 hours
- **4 years**
 - night time: 11 hours 30 minutes
- **5 years**
 - night time: 11 hours

Getting your baby used to night and day

- It's a good idea to teach your baby that night-time is different from daytime from the start. During the day, open curtains, play games and don't worry too much about everyday noises when they sleep.
- At night, you might find it helpful to:
 - keep the lights down low
 - not talk much and keep your voice quiet
 - put your baby down as soon as they've been fed and changed
 - not change your baby unless they need it
 - not play with your baby
- Your baby will gradually learn that night-time is for sleeping.

Where should my baby sleep?

- For the first six months your baby should be in the same room as you when they're asleep, both day and night. Particularly in the early weeks, you may find your baby only falls asleep in your or your partner's arms, or when you're standing by the cot.
- You can start getting your baby used to going to sleep without you comforting them by putting them down before they fall asleep or when they've just finished a feed. It may be easier to do this once your baby starts to stay alert more frequently or for longer.

Newborns sleep: what to expect

- Newborn babies will sleep on and off throughout the day and night. It can be helpful to have a pattern, but you can always change the routine to suit your needs.
- For example, you could try waking your baby for a feed just before you go to bed in the hope you'll get a long sleep before they wake up again.

Establishing a baby bedtime routine

- You may feel ready to introduce a bedtime routine when your baby is around three months old. Getting them into a simple, soothing bedtime routine can be helpful for everyone and help prevent sleeping problems later on. It's also a great opportunity to have one-to-one time with your baby.
- The routine could consist of:
 - having a bath
 - changing into night clothes and a fresh nappy
 - brushing their teeth (if they have any!)
 - putting them to bed
 - reading a bedtime story
 - dimming the lights in the room to create a calm atmosphere
 - giving a goodnight kiss and cuddle
 - singing a lullaby or having a wind-up musical mobile you can turn on when you've put your baby to bed
- As your child gets older, it can be helpful to keep to a similar bedtime routine. Too much excitement and stimulation just before bedtime can wake your child up again. Spend some time winding down and doing some calmer activities, like reading.
- Leave a little time between your baby's feed and bedtime. If you feed your baby to sleep, feeding and going to sleep will become linked in your baby's mind. When they wake in the night, they'll want a feed to help them go back to sleep.