



Good Sleep Habits For Babies

What is normal sleep?

Normal sleep comprises cycles of non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep, alternating with rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. NREM sleep consists of light sleep and deep sleep, whilst REM sleep is when dreaming occurs.

Why is sleep important?

Children need plenty of sleep to restore, rest and repair their body. Sleep also aids cognitive functioning and learning. Growth hormone levels are also at their highest during sleep.

Sleep disruption or insufficient sleep has potentially harmful effects on a child's learning, memory, attention, concentration, mood, health and overall quality of life. Sleep loss has been linked to weight gain, obesity, diabetes, depression, and poorer immunity. Daytime sleepiness results in poor school performance and increased incidence of learning disorders. There may also be an adverse impact on parental and family functioning.

A recent study in Singapore showed that Singaporean preschoolers sleep significantly lesser than recommended and have poor sleep habits.

How much sleep is needed over a 24-hour period?

Newborns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 to 20 hours • Newborns usually will wake every 3 to 5 hours a night for necessary feeds.
Infants (< 1 year old)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 to 15 hours • From 5 to 6 months of age, most healthy babies do not need overnight feeding and are able to sleep about 9 to 10 hours through the night or only wake once. They will still need 2 to 3 naps during the day.

Tips to sleeping better at night

Bedtime problems and frequent night wakings are common in young children. Helping your child develop good sleep habits can be a challenge, and it is normal to get upset when your child keeps you awake at night. However, it is important to persist in your efforts for the overall well-being of your child. Try the following tips to improve your child's sleep habits:

- Teach your baby to sleep on his own from 5 to 6 months by using a routine.
- Have a consistent bedtime and soothing routine: read him a story, listen to quiet music or give him a bath and gentle massage.
- Keep the bedroom quiet and dark and at a comfortable temperature.
- Put your baby to bed when drowsy but still awake. This will help your baby learn to fall asleep on his own in his own bed.
- Play soothing sounds like a lullaby or white noise.
- Repeat this same routine at the same time every night.
- Avoid holding, rocking or feeding your baby to sleep, as he will expect you to do the same again every time he wakes up during the night.
- Try to comfort your child without picking him up.
- Keep your baby calm and quiet if you need to feed or change him during the night; keep the lights low.



What do I do if my child cries for me at bedtime or in the night?

Even after you have established good sleep habits your child may have night-time waking due to nightmares. Active dreaming begins at toddler age. Comfort your child as necessary and encourage him to go back to sleep in his own bed.

Do not respond or return to your child's room every time he cries, complains or calls out unless he is unwell. Try to comfort your child without picking him up.

- Wait several seconds before answering and make your response time longer each time he calls.
- Remind him each time he calls that it is time to go to sleep.
- Check on him, but do not turn on the lights, pick him up, or play with him.
- Give him a chance to fall asleep on his own.
- If your child is still unable to settle himself, consider what else may be bothering him. He may be hungry, wet or soiled, or otherwise not feeling well. If so, address this and put him back to bed.

When to seek help?

Please consult your doctor if your child has:

- Problems going to bed or falling asleep
- Excessive sleepiness during the day
- Frequent night-waking
- Night terrors or sleepwalking
- Snoring or difficulty breathing at night

Source: KK Women's and Children's Hospital

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