



Sleep from a Child's Point of View

Try to look through my eyes at learning about sleep. Before you fall asleep.



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the things your child might tell you about what she is experiencing and learning about sleep if she had the words:

Through a Young Child's Eyes

Sleep

0-4 months

I fall asleep anytime, anywhere.

I spend a lot of time in deep sleep, which is why it can be hard to wake me up – even to feed me.

The first 2 months or so, I don't know the difference between night and day. That's why our sleep times might be so different.

Chances are I may sleep a few hours at night, then wake up to be fed. Repeat. And take four to six shorter naps during the day.

4-8 months

You may think we are getting this nighttime sleep thing down. And then around 4 months, I start waking up during the night.

Like you, my sleep now goes in and out of light and deep sleep about every 1-2 hours. You know how to fall asleep at night and to fall back asleep in the middle of the night. I don't. Yet.

By the time I'm 6-7 months old, I may be down to two to three naps during the day.

8-12 months

At night, I might wake up and call for you. You are my most important person, and I don't want to be apart from you.

Also, I am learning to move and do things. The world is so exciting it can be hard for me to fall back asleep.

I might be your little night owl for months – calling you. It is normal and to be expected because I love you and need you so much.

I probably still take two naps a day, 1 to 2 hours each.



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Sleep

12-18 months

As I begin to walk, I want to be on the move. It can be hard for me to fall asleep. You may even see my legs moving when I am asleep.

I may still not want to say "goodbye" to you at night.

During this time, I may be ready to shift to one afternoon nap.

18-24 months

I want to be with you – just you. At night it can be hard for me to say "goodbye."

I may wake up many times. And, as my brain learns to shift into stages of sleep, I may have nightmares or night terrors (where I may cry, mumble, call out but do not wake up all the way.)

By now, I'm probably down to one nap a day.

24-36 months

Though I know how to fall asleep, I may want to be in charge and fight going to bed.

I may still be waking up often. It is because of how my brain shifts me from deep to light sleep so many times at night. Also, I may have nighttime fears – of monsters under my bed or the shadows on my wall.

By now I may be sleeping in a big bed.



0-4 months: Learning the Difference Between Night and Day



I've spent the last 9 months in a cozy, dark place sleeping whenever I want. No wonder I get night and day mixed up.

Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your baby understand how life works in your family: people sleep at night and spend time together in the day. You can do this by changing your space and deciding how and when you play with him:



Let him know that daytime is for being with you and playing:

- Limit naps to 3 hours starting at 2 weeks old. Stretch out the time between naps. Try to get some rest yourself when he is dozing.
- Keep him up. Play, talk, and sing together when he is awake and alert.
- Make your space light and bright.
- No need to hush. Let the phone ring, dishwasher whirr, or door buzz.



At night, make it easier for him to fall asleep:

- Keep the lights low and noise down as you feed him and change him - even in the middle of the night.
- Limit talking and playing. He'll start to get the idea it is time for sleep.
- Rock or sway him gently in your arms.
- Give him something to suck - but not his bottle. Bottles are for eating, which is awake time with you.
- Swaddle him or wrap him in a cozy sleep sack.
- Play a continuous sound, such as white noise.
- Gently massage his tiny arms and legs.



Other ideas you want to try?



4-8 months: Learning to Fall Asleep and Fall Back to Sleep

Can you believe that at one time you didn't know how to fall and stay asleep?



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your baby start to learn how to calm herself and how to fall asleep at bedtime. You can do this by giving her cues that it is time for bed, and you can look for cues that she is getting tired.



Create a routine to let her know it is time to get ready to sleep.

Whatever you do, do it every time – day or night.

- Change her diaper.
- Dim the lights.
- Make the room quiet.
- Explain it is time for sleep in a quiet, gentle voice.
- Sing her a song and/or rub her back.



Watch for cues to help you decide if she is over-tired.

- Is she yawning, rubbing her eyes, fussing? These are signs she may be tired. Try starting your bedtime routine 15 minutes earlier. Being too tired makes it hard to relax and fall asleep – as many of us know.

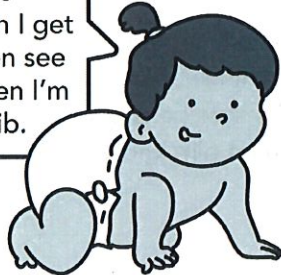


Other ideas you want to try?



8-12 months: Helping Your On-the-Move Baby Slow Down to Sleep

It's hard for me to stop - even when I get tired. You may even see my leg moving when I'm asleep in my crib.



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your active baby slow down, so he can fall asleep. You can do this by letting him know it is time to sleep and keeping him cozy and relaxed.



Use your routine to tell him "time to sleep."

- Give him plenty of active play during the day. Before bedtime, begin to calm down your activities and the noise level. Explain in a soothing voice, "It will soon be time for bed. Let's sit here and play with your blocks for a while or crumple up this paper."
- Your routine may change a bit as he gets older. For example, it may be bath, reading, or story time, or it could be bath, reading, a gentle back rub, and a kiss goodnight. Whatever works for both of you is great.



Give him a chance to calm himself.

- If he cries for you after you leave the room, give him a minute or two to calm himself.
- If he keeps crying, go to him, comfort him. Rub his arm. Use calming, loving words or songs. Try these strategies before lifting him out of bed or taking him to another room.



Keep the temperature just right.

- Cold? Dress him in one layer more than what you are wearing. A wearable blanket or sleep sack will keep baby warm when cold winds blow, but it will not cover his face.
- Hot? Remove a layer.



Other ideas you want to try?



12-18 months: Helping Your On-the-Move Toddler Slow Down, so She can Sleep



It isn't easy for me to say "goodbye" to you each night to fall asleep.

Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your toddler learn to calm himself. You can do this as you take steps to make sure he is comfortable and feels safe and then let him know it is time to sleep.



Keep him comfortable.

- Be sure his tummy is filled throughout the day.
- Is he getting a new tooth? He may need something cold (a teether or frozen bagel) to chew on during the day. His healthcare provider may have other ideas.



Let him know it is time to sleep.

- Keep to a regular routine and bedtime.
- Clear away toys in his crib – except for his *lovey* or cuddly toy.
- Keep his morning nap as long as possible. When he first gives it up, he may need to go to bed earlier.



Help him feel safe.

- If he cries for you, let him know you are there, then give him a chance to settle down himself.
- Be sure he has his *lovey* or cuddly toy if he has one. It may be a *blanket* or stuffed animal or even one of your tee-shirts. It carries the feelings of being cuddled by you and helps him feel safe.
- If he keeps crying, rub his arm. Use calming, loving words or songs. Try these strategies before lifting him out of bed or taking him to another room.



Other ideas you want to try?



24-36 months: Making Bedtime Work for Your 2-Year-Old (and You)



I like to do things my way - even go to sleep.
Can we figure out bedtime so it's a win-win?

Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help you get your 2-year-old to sleep. You can do this as you give him a sense of control, let him make some decisions, and help him feel safe and close to you – even after you leave his room.



Let him know bedtime is coming.

- Wind down activities starting half an hour before bed. Play soft, soothing music and quiet games.
- Follow your *goodnight...sweet dreams* routine.



Give him a sense of control.

- Give him a few real choices: "Do you want to wear your blue or green pajamas?" "What song should we sing?"
- Does he keep asking for "just one more...drink, story, glass of water?" Give him one *extra*. And let him know *only one*.
- Is he in a big bed? Tell him how proud you are when he stays in it.
- If he keeps popping out of bed, return him, explain it is time to sleep, say "good night," and leave.



Help him feel close to you.

- If he cries for you, let him know you are there, then give him a chance to settle down himself.
- Be sure he has his *lovey* or cuddly toy (if he has one) when you leave the room. It may be a blanket or stuffed animal or even one of your tee-shirts. These transitional objects give him the feeling of being cuddled by you and help him feel safe.
- If he keeps crying, go to him. Gently rub his arm or back. Use calming, loving words or songs, and explain kindly and firmly that it is bedtime and that you will be nearby to keep him safe.



Other ideas you want to try?



Safe Sleeping

When you keep me safe, I feel more confident.



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help you keep your young infant safe during nap and bedtime.



Safety Alert: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

SIDS is the sudden, unexplained death of a baby younger than 1 year—usually during sleep time. There are no warning signs or known causes. The risk is highest for babies from 2-4 months and then declines. Most SIDS deaths happen in the first 6 months.

Here are some steps you can take to reduce the possibility of SIDS:



Place baby on her back to sleep and tell grandparents, babysitters, and child care providers to do the same. Sleeping on her stomach or side may make it harder to breathe. By the time she is able to roll over, SIDS is not such a concern.



Share a room—but not a bed—with your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that baby sleeps in her own crib or bassinet. Why? Your sheets, pillows, blankets, and even your body, if you roll over on her, can block her breathing. Put her crib next to your bed for comforting or breastfeeding. Then put her back when you are ready to sleep.



Lay her on her back to sleep on a firm mattress or surface with a fitted sheet. Remove all blankets, toys, pillows, and crib bumpers.



Avoid overheating. Let baby sleep in light comfy clothes in a temperature you find comfortable. If you think she may be cold, dress her in a onesie or a sleep sack rather than a blanket. It won't bunch up near her face and block her breathing.



Stop smoking around your baby. Don't let anyone light up around her or even wear smoky clothes around her. Secondhand smoke increases the chances of SIDS.



If you are breastfeeding, keep it up as long as you can. Some experts think breast milk might protect baby from infections that could raise the risk of SIDS.



Immunize your baby. Research shows that following the immunization recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) leads to a 50% reduced risk of SIDS as compared to babies who haven't gotten all their shots.



Consider giving her a pacifier to fall asleep.