



# Learning to Grow

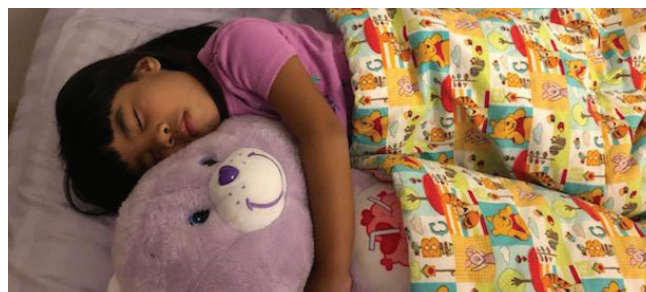
MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

## Understanding Sleep: Tips for Parents & Caregivers

Does your child have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep? If so, you're not alone. Sleep problems are common among young children. According to the National Sleep Foundation, nearly one in every three children ages 2-5 years has trouble falling asleep or staying asleep through the night on a regular basis. Whether this is the case for your child or not, understanding sleep is important for every parent and caregiver.

Here are four essential things to know about sleep:

- ♥ **Sleep is incredibly important.** Sleep plays a crucial role in the development of young minds. When children sleep, their brains are actively working to form new connections. Research shows that sleep impacts learning and memory; focus and attention; cognitive performance (e.g., creativity, problem solving); physical health, including healthy growth; the immune system (providing protection against illness); and behavioral and emotional health.
- ♥ **Establish a bedtime ritual/routine.** A bedtime routine, started about 45 minutes before the child's set bedtime, is simply a pattern of activities done in the same order each night (i.e., warm bath, brush teeth, story time). It lessens anxieties and helps your child relax, promotes a sense of security, and helps her get ready for sleep. A consistent and comfortable bedtime routine is associated with better sleep among children, promotes emotional closeness with a caring adult, and can prevent long-term sleep problems.
- ♥ **Daytime activities matter.** Getting natural sunlight and being physically active during the day help people sleep better at night. Many



childhood sleep problems can be linked to daytime behavior.

- ♥ **Don't overlook your own sleep needs.** When you're fatigued and tired yourself, it can make it harder to keep up with parenting needs and support healthy sleep habits in your child.

In this newsletter, we will further discuss sleep as it relates to each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers; and present strategies to help you establish healthy sleep habits for your child and help you get on track to more restful nights of your own.

### This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

# Infants

Newborn babies can easily sleep for more than 17 hours per day; however, they rarely sleep through the night and this is normal. At birth, a baby has not yet fully developed a consistent sleep-wake pattern. As a result, sleep will likely occur in segments throughout the night and day. As your baby develops a regular sleep cycle, most of her sleep will occur at night although it may continue to be fragmented for some time. Between the ages of 4-12 months, infants will generally need 12-16 hours of sleep (nighttime and daytime sleep).

Here are some tips to help you and your infant , and yourself, get better sleep:

- ♥ **Consistent routines.** During the day, try keeping the home bright, and stimulate her to be awake more by providing more play time. Exposing her to sunlight at day, and darkening her room at night are useful ways to help her internal clock lock onto a nightly sleep pattern.
- ♥ **Prepare for night-time feeding.** Set up everything you need before you go to bed (e.g., diaper, wipes). Avoid letting baby cry



for long or she will be too distressed to feed properly. Keep the lights low, screens turned off, and your voice to a whisper. Avoid playing with baby as you feed her. Place her in the crib, on her back, after the feed.

## Activity for Infants: *Establishing a Bedtime Story Ritual*

What You Need:

Any children's book, especially books with simple colorful pictures

What to Do:

1. Look for tired cues such as grimacing, clenching fists, or crying. After seeing the first tired signs (day or night), plan to settle baby by going through your established bedtime routine.
2. Include a story in your baby's bedtime routine from the day she is born. Reading stories with verses that have a gentle cadence helps babies filter out the stimulating world around them and relax.
3. Choose a quiet, comfortable spot to cuddle up and read to your baby, using a gentle, quiet tone.
4. Let her touch the book and point to the pictures. Acknowledge her, "Yes, the cow is jumping over the moon." However, save the more active interactions for your daytime readings.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*



# Toddlers

Toddlers generally need 11-14 hours of sleep, which includes one or two daytime naps. A toddler who fights the morning nap is probably ready for just an afternoon nap. It is important to set a regular time for your child to go to bed, and stick to it as much as possible. This trains the body to prepare its sleep hormones automatically. Toddlers are more and more aware of their surroundings, so distractions (such as toys in their bed) might disrupt them when it is time to sleep.

Here are some tips to help your toddler, and yourself, get better sleep:

- ♥ **Daytime activities.** Make sure there is enough physical activity for your toddler during the day. Consistent day time naps can also make night time sleep easier.
- ♥ **Sleep for parents and caregivers: Night waking.** Calling or crying for parents and waking during the night are common at this age. To get through this phase, stick to the same bedtime routine, reassure your child that everything is okay and that you're close by, keep night visits brief and boring, and



give your child the chance to fall back asleep without you. Set rules on how many drinks of water you'll allow, and how many times you'll pick up the toy that's thrown out of the bed. If you have an early riser, try using black out curtains or keep blinds closed.

## Activity for Toddlers: *Goodnight Teddy Bear Ritual*

What You Need:

- Child's teddy bear or another favorite stuffed animal.
- Pajamas for teddy (small clothing item or onesie, or small lightweight blanket)
- Pillow case, or cardboard box for teddy's bed

What to Do:

1. When children see something other than themselves participate in a bedtime routine, this helps them see and do what is expected of them. At bedtime, have your child go through a bedtime routine with her teddy bear.
2. Have her dress teddy in pajamas (or wrap him in a lightweight blanket).
3. Encourage her to read a story to teddy, or you can read to both teddy and her.
4. Next, have her tuck teddy into a pillow case, or place him in a "bed" next to her.
5. Say "Goodnight" to teddy.



*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*



## Preschoolers

Preschoolers generally need 10-13 hours of sleep, including a nap. Many children this age feel afraid of the dark, which may disrupt their sleep. It's important to show your child that you understand her fears, and reassure her that she is safe. A nightlight, comfort items such as a teddy bear, and a bedtime routine can help ease anxieties.

Here are some tips to help your preschooler, and yourself, get better sleep:

- ♥ **Daytime activities** Physical activity during the day helps to reduce stress levels. It is important to limit screen time (TV, iPad, mobile devices, etc.) because children who are off their screens are more active, burning their natural physical energy during the day, which makes it easier to settle down at bedtime.
- ♥ **Sleep for parents and caregivers: Teaching children to sleep.** You can teach your child



to sleep by consistently taking her back to bed when she gets up earlier than she's supposed to and helping to soothe her anxiety after bad dreams. If your child had a nightmare, ask her about it in the morning. Help her come up with some alternative endings to her bad dream, and talk about other images she can focus on. Again, reassure her that she is safe.

### Activity for Preschoolers: *Make a Bedtime Routine Chart*

What You Need:

- Printed/drawn pictures of different steps in the bedtime routine
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Markers

What to Do:

1. Talk with your child about the things she does before going to sleep. For example, taking a bath, changing into her pajamas, brushing her teeth, reading books, then saying goodnight.
2. Next, take a photo of your child engaged in each of these steps and print them OR have her draw a picture of herself doing each of these activities on a small square piece of paper about 3"x 3". You will need one small piece of paper for each of the activities in her routine.
3. Put the pictures in the correct sequence and glue each of the pictures onto the paper. The pictures should be in the order of her bedtime routine.
4. Number and label the steps of her bedtime routine under each picture. For example, under the first photo write, "1. I take a bath".
5. Tape the Bedtime Routine Chart to a wall where she can see it. Each night before starting the routine, go over the steps to remind her of her routine. You might also want to review the steps after completing them before saying goodnight



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## How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

### Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles, e.g., fingers, hands
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Develop a close bond with you
- ♥ Feel important and good about herself

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Develop an interest in books and an enjoyment of reading
- ♥ Build verbal skills and vocabulary

### Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop her creativity and imagination
- ♥ Increase her observation, listening and understanding skills, and attention span



## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

### Bedtime Smoothie: Banana & Nutmeg Smoothie

Adapted from <https://restonic.com/blog/smoothie-recipes-sweet-dreams-2546>

The sleep-inducing ingredients in this smoothie make it a great bedtime snack for children and adults

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- 1-1/2 cup almond milk
- 1/4 Tbsp. nutmeg
- 2 Tbsp. honey

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Pour into a cup and enjoy your bedtime smoothie!



## Resources

### ***Healthy Sleep Habits: How Many Hours Does Your Child Need?***

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/sleep/Pages/healthy-sleep-habits-how-many-hours-does-your-child-need.aspx>

In this article, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) provides childhood sleep guidelines and tips on healthy sleep habits.

### ***Helping Your Toddler Sleep***

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/toddlersleep-video.html?WT.ac=p-ra>

In this 3-minute video, KidsHealth (Nemours) presents tips for instilling good sleep habits in your young child.



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### **Infants and Toddlers**

#### ***Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown**

"Goodnight stars...Goodnight air...Goodnight noises everywhere."

These poetic words from this classic children's story has prepared many children for bedtime. The story takes place in a great green room where a little bunny quietly says goodnight to all the familiar things in the room. The quiet poetry of the words, and gentle illustrations makes it the perfect book for bedtime.

#### ***Time for Bed* by Mem Fox**

Soft, cozy illustrations of sleepy baby animals and their soothing parents are accompanied by rhyme destined to lull wakeful little ones to sleep, making it an essential bedtime book for babies and toddlers.

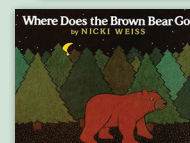
### **Preschoolers**

#### ***Where Does the Brown Bear Go?* by Nicki Weiss**

"When the lights go down on the city street, where does the white cat go, honey? Where does the white cat go?" The gentle cadence of each verse and rich, textured color-pencil illustrations capture this bedtime story's mystical mood as the text repetitively asks where different animals go when night comes. It is a perfect goodnight book that will win the hearts of young listeners.

#### ***Happy Birthday, Moon* by Frank Asch**

Moonbear comes up with the perfect birthday gift for the moon in this charming beloved classic by award-winning author and illustrator Frank Asch. This same author has written several other stories about Moonbear, including *Mooncake* and *Moondance*.



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