



Healthy sleep habits are a learned behavior. You can teach your child to develop these habits by making sleep a priority in your home.

## Why is sleep important for children?

Sleep...

- Improves their ability to learn and pay attention
- Improves their mood
- Helps their bodies and minds recharge
- Keeps their bodies healthy, manages metabolism, and helps fight diseases

## How much sleep does my child need?<sup>1</sup>

Infants ages **4 months to 12 months** should sleep 12 to 16 hours per 24 hours (including naps)

Children ages **1 to 2 years** should sleep 11 to 14 hours per 24 hours (including naps)

Children ages **3 to 5 years** should sleep 10 to 13 hours per 24 hours (including naps)

Recommendations do not include an amount for infants less than 4 months old because there is a wide range of normal sleep hours in this age group.

**Note:** These are general guidelines and every child is different. If you have specific concerns about your child's sleep patterns, please reach out to your child's doctor.

## Teach Your Baby How To Sleep

Newborns need help to set their body clock to distinguish between day and night. You can adjust the amount of light exposure in their room to make a distinction between day sleep (naps) and night sleep.

### Sleep Environment

- Keep the room at a comfortable temperature and avoid overheating. Remember, babies should not sleep with blankets, pillows, or sleep positioners such as sleep nests because they increase the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Keep your child's room dark at night. Room darkening shades are especially helpful when the sun sets later in the spring and summer.
- If your baby is up to feed at night, use a dim light or a lamp with a red-light bulb to avoid blue light such as the light from your phone. Exposure to blue light keeps babies (and grown-ups!) from falling asleep.

### Get your baby to bed as soon as you see signs of sleepiness.

Look for the following signs and put your baby to bed for both naps and overnight sleep awake before the baby gets fussy. This teaches your baby how to fall asleep in bed and to be able to self soothe and sleep independently.

- Becoming more quiet
- Long stares
- Less movement
- Drooping eyelids

You can teach your baby the foundation of good sleep as a newborn. Starting at 4 months of age you can teach your baby to sleep longer stretches at night if you are ready to do so. There are many different ways to do this and you will need to find what method best suits your parenting style. Ask your healthcare provider when sleep teaching would be appropriate for your baby.



## Tips for Better Sleep

Celebrate sleep! Avoid using bedtime as a punishment. Ask your kids about their dreams in the morning to get them excited about going to sleep.

Establish a set bedtime and a consistent wake time for children to help them get adequate sleep and teach them sleep is a priority.

Set up a routine to cue your child it is time to sleep. Avoid using the TV or tablet to calm your child before bed. Screens give off a blue light which suppresses the release of our sleep hormone melatonin and keeps us awake.

Bedtime routines may include:

- Giving your child a bath
- Brushing their teeth
- Reading a book
- Playing white noise or soft music
- Turning off screens 1–2 hours before bed
- Dimming room lights

An easy routine to remember is “Brush, Book, Bed.”

## Tips For Working Parents

Sometimes a child’s body clock and sleep schedule don’t match their parent’s work schedule. If a child is an early riser, he/she may be ready to sleep soon after parents return home from work. This can lead to bedtime chaos as parents frantically rush to get the child fed, bathed and in bed.

Here are a few ideas to troubleshoot this situation:

- Make morning the time you spend together as a family
- Eat breakfast together
- Ask your child’s caregiver to help with dinner and bathing before you pick up your child so when you get home you can have time before bed to connect with your child in the limited evening time.
- Prepare for the week by shopping for needed supplies and keeping clean clothing, diapering supplies, and other important items ready for each day. Pack supplies the night before.
- Meal prep on the weekends to cut down on cooking time on weekday evenings. This may help you enjoy more meals together as a family.

## Model Good Sleep Habits

Adults should aim to get 7–9 hours of quality sleep each night. Sleep deprivation affects your mood and health and potentially your ability to be a calm, attentive parent. Model healthy sleep habits for your child and everyone will benefit. You deserve good sleep too!

1. Hirshkowitz, M., Whiton, K., Albert, S. M., Alessi, C., Bruni, O., DonCarlos, L., Hazen, N., Herman, J., Katz, E. S., Kheirandish-Gozal, L., Neubauer, D. N., O’Donnell, A. E., Ohayon, M., Peever, J., Rawding, R., Sachdeva, R. C., Setters, B., Vitiello, M. V., Ware, J. C., & Adams Hillard, P. J. (2015). National Sleep Foundation’s sleep time duration recommendations: methodology and results summary. *Sleep health*, 1(1), 40–43.

