

## TODDLER SLEEP

By the time your child reaches one year of age, bedtime rituals have become very important. A familiar evening routine helps children to be more cooperative and feel secure. Whenever possible, both parents should be involved. This bedtime ritual might include reading, making up stories, or singing. Kiss and hug your child “goodnight” and make sure that his security objects are nearby. Finish the bedtime ritual before your child falls asleep.

Once put to bed, your child should stay there. Some children protest or have temper tantrums at bedtime. Some refuse to lie down. You should ignore these behaviors and leave the room. Establish the rule that your child may not leave his bedroom. If he does come out, return him quickly to the bedroom and avoid any conversation. If you respond to his protests in this way every time, he will learn he cannot prolong bedtime.

If your child has nightmares or bedtime fears, reassure him. Never ignore your child’s fears or punish him for having fears. Everyone has four or five dreams a night; some of these are bad dreams. If nightmares become frequent, try to determine what might be causing them, such as something your child might have seen on TV. (See “Nightmares and Night Terrors” Handout).

Don’t worry about the amount of sleep your child is getting. Different people need different amounts of sleep at different ages. If your child is not tired or irritable during the day, he is getting enough sleep.

Naps are important to young children but should be limited to no more than 2 hours. Most children stop taking morning naps between 18 months and 2 years of age and give up their afternoon naps between 3 and 6 years of age.

Suggested Reading:

[Solve Your Child’s Sleep Problems](#) by Richard Ferber, M.D.

[A Guide to Your Child’s Sleep](#) by George Cohen

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