

THE BUSY PARENT'S GUIDE TO HELPING YOUR CHILD WIND DOWN

Helping your child to fall asleep and stay asleep is a challenge for most parents. Remember, every child is different so it requires some flexibility to find the patterns that will work for your family. Experiment with a combination of these techniques as you put together your own formula for success.

Steps to Take During the Day

- 1. Seek out natural light.** Even though we're surrounded with electric lights, our bodies are still attuned to the sun. Open the curtains to give your child exposure to morning light and spend at least a half hour outdoors during each day.
- 2. Engage in physical activity.** Regular exercise promotes restful sleep at any age. Encourage sports, games, and playtime. Ride bikes or throw a ball around in the backyard.
- 3. Maintain a sensible schedule.** It's harder to come to a complete stop when you've been rushing around all day. Pace yourselves. Regular eating patterns will also reduce the demand for nighttime snacks.
- 4. Take naps.** Evening hours may be the only time working parents can spend with their kids. Dozing in the afternoon can compensate for slightly later bedtimes.
- 5. Reduce environmental irritants.** Chemicals and allergens often interfere with sleep. Select natural bedding and sleep wear. Clear away dust and pet dander.

Steps to Take at Night

- 1. Set a consistent bedtime.** Aim to have your child go to bed and rise at the same time every day. Stick to a similar schedule on weekends and holidays.
- 2. Provide advance notice.** Older children will understand a warning that it's 10 minutes until lights out. Babies start responding to cues like running bath water and putting on pajamas.
- 3. Turn off the TV.** Artificial light stimulates our brains. Give your kids a curfew to turn off all devices a couple of hours before bed.
- 4. Read bedtime stories.** Story time creates a great transition for sleep and a lot of happy memories. It will also instill a love for learning.
- 5. Develop other bedtime rituals.** Warm baths and soft music add up to a soothing atmosphere. Throw in a teddy bear or stuffed bunny for overnight company.
- 6. Play white noise.** Any monotonous sound hastens sleep. Turn on a fan or play a recording of the ocean.
- 7. Warm up.** Warmth is also conducive to happy dreams. Give your child flannel sheets to snuggle in. Bedroom temperatures of about 70 degrees with 50% humidity are usually ideal.

Steps Especially Designed for Babies

1. **Swaddle them.** Sleep sacks and tightly wrapped blankets comfort babies. Make it snug enough to hold their arms and legs still.
2. **Massage them.** Gentle touching puts your baby at ease and draws you closer together. Take a class or watch a video for instructions.
3. **Burp them.** When babies cry, they swallow air. Gas builds up and makes them cry more. A soft thump on the back will break the cycle.
4. **Move them.** Even adults tend to doze off more easily when they're riding in a car. Help recreate the motion in the womb for your baby by rocking them in your arms or in a chair. If you put them on top of a running dryer, be sure to hold them in place.
5. **See your doctor.** Your doctor can check for medical causes if your baby wakes up frequently and shows signs of distress. Two common issues are allergies and a condition called gastroesophageal reflux that is like heartburn. Otherwise, most sleep disturbances are natural and will pass in time.

Get your child off to an early start with good sleep habits and a positive attitude about bedtime. Your whole family will enjoy better rest and better health.

Need more parenting support?

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