

# TOP 6 SLEEP TIPS

## 1. A Regular Bed Time

Your child's body-clock controls the release of the sleep hormone, melatonin, which is needed to fall asleep. If bedtime varies from one day to another, your child may find it difficult to fall asleep, even when they seem tired. This happens when their body releases melatonin, but they aren't ready to go to bed so they use adrenaline to stay awake. They end up with bursts of energy even though they are exhausted. That's why some children seem "wired" before bed. Keep bedtime regular to avoid this.

## 2. A Bed Time Routine

You don't need to read the same book, sing the same song, or do every minute detail of the bedtime routine in the same way every day. But you do need to have a series of activities that you do in the same order in the lead up to bedtime to help your child know that it is nearly bedtime. This means that when the moment to put them into their bed arrives, it's not a surprise. Surprises bring on adrenaline which works against sleep hormones.

Regular routines make life predictable which helps children to transition from one thing to another more easily. A quick warm bath, brush teeth, put pyjamas on, read a couple of stories and hop into bed. That's all you need!



### 3. Feeling Secure

For children to go to bed happily and sleep well throughout the night, they need to feel secure and have a strong bond with their parents. When we don't feel safe, our body's natural response of fight or flight kicks in, triggering a release of adrenaline so we can run from or fight off danger. A baby's response to fight or flight is to cry because they innately know that this will ensure they maintain adult attention, which will keep them safe. A toddler or older child's response is also to maintain adult attention and they will do this in any way they think will work. If they feel secure and know that the adults looking after them will keep them safe, they can relax in their beds knowing that if danger arises in the night, the adults will rescue them from their beds. Regular routines and secure, consistent boundaries help children feel secure.



### 4. They Need to be Tired

This may sound obvious, but many people get so hooked up in following a routine that they forget to look for tired-signs coming from their babies, toddlers, and even older children. If you put your child in their crib, cot or bed when they aren't tired, unless they are quite happy to chill out on their own, they are likely to call for your attention which will gradually escalate to crying and possibly even tantrums if you don't respond.

So, as well as following a regular routine, watch out for yawning, eye and ear rubbing, far-away stares, crankiness and clumsiness or jerky movements. If you don't see any of these, wait a little longer, or spend a bit more time on your bedtime routine.

You don't want your child to be "over-tired" and full of adrenaline, but you DO need them to be tired enough to go to sleep.



## 5. The Right Temperature

Most bedrooms in the UK will drop down by 2-6 degrees between 2am and 4am. While we sleep, our breathing slows down and our heartrate slows so our blood is pumped more slowly around our bodies, lowering our body temperature.



## SOLUTIONS

- Have the room thermometer or baby monitor in the right place. Away from windows and doors and level with where your child sleeps.
- A child-safe thermostatic electric radiator (or similar) will click on and off when the room changes temperature.
- Dress your child suitably for the time of year. A long-sleeved vest and baby-grow under a 2.5 tog sleeping bag or a cotton cardigan over a sleeping bag if they wake regularly with freezing hands AND cold arms.
- An extra blanket can be added during the night if a baby wakes up cold. Crying increases breathing rate and heart rate which will start to warm your baby up, so if they've been crying for a while, they will feel warm but will soon cool down again when they're asleep.
- Get the right thickness of duvet for the time of year and make sure it's tucked in, so it doesn't come off during the night.



## 6. The Right Amount of Sleep

AGE	Night-Time Sleep (Hours)	Day-Time Sleep (Hours)	Total Sleep (Hours)
1 month	6-9 broken by 3-5 wakes	6-8 (4-6 naps)	15-18
3 months	7-10 broken by 3-5 wakes	5-9 (4-6 naps)	14-16
6 months	10-12 broken by 1-3 wakes	3-4 (3 naps)	13-16
9 months	11 unbroken	3-4 (2 naps)	14-15
12 months	11-12 unbroken	2-3 (1-2 naps)	13-15
18 months	10-12 unbroken	2 (1 nap)	12-14
2 years	10-12	2 (1 nap)	12-14
3 years	10-12	0.5-1	11-13
4-7 years	11-12	0	11-12
8-10 years	11-12	0	11-12
11-13 years	10-11	0	10-11
14-18 years	8-11 longer sleep taken on the weekends to make up for lost hours during the school week		

This will vary between children but below is a guide to help you work out approximately how much sleep your child will need as they grow. Once you have worked this out, you can then set their bedtime based on what time you would like them to wake in the morning.

A 7pm bedtime is only suitable IF your child needs 11 to 12 hours sleep AND you want them to wake at 6.00 or 7.00am, which often doesn't happen until babies are between 4 and 6 months old. In the early months, when babies only need between 6 and 10 consecutive hours of sleep, putting them to bed at 7.00pm can cause them to wake for several hours between 2am and 5am. Just when you want to sleep. A later bedtime is preferable until your baby grows and bedtime naturally and gradually creep earlier.

# Need Anymore Help?

## Speak to the Sleep Fairy

+44 (0) 7977 462252

dee@sleepfairyparentrescue.co.uk



Follow us for more handy tips!

 sleepfairydee  sleepfairydee

