



Bedtime

Everyone hopes bedtime will be a pleasant end to the day. Yet, for young children, it can be difficult. Many bedtime hassles can be reduced by following a few of the following suggestions.

Why children struggle with bedtime...

There may be a variety of reasons why children don't want to go to bed. Some of the more common ones include:

- They don't want to end the day's fun.
- Fears such as parents leaving, the dark, ghosts, and monsters.
- Unable to relax without help.
- Inability to recognize they are tired.
- Want more time with a parent, especially if the parent works outside the home.
- Stress about childcare, school, friends, etc.

How parents can help...

- Try to stay as calm as possible while being firm about the bedtime routine.
- Allow thirty minutes to one hour of semi-quiet activity before bed. Draw, paint, read or tell stories. Children need time to wind down from the day's activities.
- Follow routines. Children thrive on routines. Decide what you want to include in your pre-bedtime routine and stick with it at night. You may want to start with a bath, teeth brushing, then move on to a few stories, followed by comments about the day and tomorrow's plans, a drink of water, a trip to the bathroom, then hugs and kisses and leave the room.
- Keep in mind that parents can set the stage for sleep but cannot force the child to sleep.
- Allow your child to read or play quietly in bed with a night light on and avoid the hassles that go along with demanding the child immediately go to sleep in a dark room. The child can drift off to sleep when she is ready.
- An audiotape of lullabies or of the parent reading a familiar story might help a child fall asleep.
- If it is acceptable to you and/or your partner, consider the option of allowing a young child to sleep with you in or beside your bed. Some children feel more secure and can transition to their own beds as they become more independent.

When a child gets up after being left for the night...

- Calmly walk her back to bed, without fuss, until she stays.
- Encourage the child to self-comfort with a favorite stuffed toy, blanket or pacifier.
- Tell her you want her to relax in bed and you'll see her in the morning.

How much sleep does a child need?

Each child's need to sleep is different. However, if you are having trouble with bedtime, or if your child is often fussy, he may not be getting enough sleep and is cranky because he is overtired. The following is a guideline for the typical amount of sleep a child needs.

Age	Daytime	Nighttime	Total hours
1 week	8 - 8½ hrs	9 hrs	17 - 17½ hrs
1 month	6½ hrs	9½ hrs	16 hrs
3 months	5½ hrs	10½ hrs	16 hrs
6 months	3½ - 4 hrs	12 hrs	15½ - 16 hrs
12 months	3 hrs	12½ hrs	15½ hrs
2 years	1½ - 2 hrs	12½ hrs	14 - 16 hrs
3 years	1 hrs	12 hrs	13 hrs
4 years		12½ hrs	12½ hrs
5 years		11½ - 12 hrs	11½ - 12 hrs

Chart adapted from **Solving Your Child's Sleep Problems** by Richard Ferber, M.D.

For more information call your County Health Department.

Cleveland County Health Department
Mary Ann Boersma, M.S., C.C.P.S.
Child Development Specialist
(405) 321-4048 ext. 254