



Early Learning Digest

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Special Sleep Edition

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Helping Baby Sleep through the Night

Sleepless nights are common for most new parents. Newborns sleep 16 or more hours a day, but often in stretches of just a few hours at a time. By age 3 months, many babies sleep at least five hours at a time. By age 6 months, nighttime stretches of nine to 12 hours are possible. Here are some tips to help your baby become a good sleeper:

- Encourage activity during the day. When your baby is awake, engage him by talking, singing, and playing.
- Follow a consistent bedtime routine. Try relaxing favorites such as bathing, cuddling, singing, playing quiet music or reading.
- Put your baby to bed drowsy, but awake. This will help your baby associate bed with the process of falling asleep.
- Give your baby time to settle down. Many babies fuss or cry before finding a comfortable position and falling asleep. If the crying doesn't stop, speak to your baby calmly and stroke her back.
- Consider a pacifier. If your baby has trouble settling down, a pacifier might help. Research suggests that using a pacifier during sleep helps



reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

- Expect frequent stirring at night. Babies often wriggle, squirm and twitch in their sleep. Unless your baby is hungry or uncomfortable, it is OK to wait a few minutes to see if he falls back to sleep.
- Keep nighttime care low-key. When she needs care or feeding during the night, use dim lights, a soft voice and calm movements.

A newborn's sleep pattern might be erratic at first, but a more consistent sleep schedule will emerge as your baby matures and can go longer between feedings.

Source: "Baby Sleep: Helping Baby Sleep through the Night," <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/baby-sleep/FL00118/METHOD=print,2011>.

Crib to Bed

Most children make the transition from crib to bed anywhere between one and a half to three years of age, but experts recommend waiting until a child is three years old, if possible. If the child stands in the crib, if the crib rail falls below chest level, or if it can be climbed over, it is definitely time for a bed!

Here are some ways to help your child transition from crib to bed:

Do it slowly. Her reactions may vary from excitement and eagerness to refusal and fear. Be patient. If she is too upset, it may be too soon to move to a bed. Put the bed in the same place the crib used to be and let your child use the blankets from the crib, even if they are too small. This can comfort her during the transition.

Make it a big deal. Include your child in the process of picking out the new bed. If he is inheriting a bed from a sibling, friend, or relative, you can still make it special by explaining to him that he is growing up just like the previous owner. Let your child help make the bed and put dolls or animals to sleep in it.

Discuss rules. Most experts recommend being firm with a child about staying in bed. If she comes to you,

Continued on page 2

Crib to Bed

Continued from page 1

remind her that it is bedtime and that means it is time for everyone to be in their own bed. Be sure to child-proof your home in case she leaves the bed. Let her know when she can come find you when she wakes up (such as needing to go to the bathroom).

Create a routine. Follow the same bedtime rituals with your child every day. This can include taking a bath, putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, reading a story, or exchanging a goodnight hug or kiss. Toddlers need consistent routines.

The transition from crib to bed can take anywhere from one night up to a few months for your child to get used to the switch. Remember...patience. Give it time so this milestone will be another one remembered fondly.

Source: "The Crib to Bed Transition," Children's Trust Fund of Massachusetts, 2007.

help me



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

Children's Sleep Problems

Sleep problems are some of the most common problems parents face with their kids. To help minimize common sleep problems, a parent should develop consistent, regular bedtime sleep routines for children. Parents often find that feeding and rocking help an infant to get to sleep. As the child leaves infancy, bedtime routines such as reading stories and teeth-brushing can help the child understand it is time for bed.

Nightmares are relatively common during childhood. The child often remembers the nightmare, which usually involves a threat to them. Nightmares can begin at any age, affect girls more often than boys, may be frequent, and can interfere with restful sleep.

Some children suffer from night terrors, sleepwalking, and sleep talking. Sleep terrors are different from nightmares. The child with sleep terrors will scream and appear to be awake, but is confused and is not able to communicate. The child usually has no memory of the sleep terror in the morning. Sleep terrors usually begin between ages 4 and 12. Children who



sleepwalk may appear to be awake, but are actually asleep and in danger of hurting themselves. Sleepwalking usually begins between ages 6 and 12. Both sleep terrors and sleepwalking run in families and affect boys more often than girls.

As children mature they usually get over common sleep problems and disorders. Parents with ongoing concerns should contact their pediatrician, a sleep specialist or a trained child mental health professional for a comprehensive evaluation. A range of treatments is available for sleep disorders.

Source: http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Childrens_Sleep_Problems_34.aspx.

"Kiss your children goodnight even if they are already asleep."

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

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