

Everyday Learning Series
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About babies
toddlers and
preschoolers



Everyday learning about

sleep

Pam Linke





About the author

Pam Linke

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About Early Childhood Australia

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The most important early learning happens through day-to-day life experiences and the **Everyday Learning** books are about how parents and carers can make the most of these experiences. What an exciting responsibility it is to be helping build the foundations for the future of young children!

- › The first years of life are the foundation for all later growth, development and learning.
- › Every experience counts! Babies and young children are learning all the time, with most learning taking place in relationships.
- › Research shows that what happens in these years is the key to:
 - being able to relate confidently and effectively with others
 - mental and emotional health
 - educational success.

Babies and young children are learning all the time.

What do babies and young children need, to get the best start for living and learning?

To learn best they need parents and carers (their first teachers) who:

- › are warm and caring

- › know each baby or child very well and appreciate what is special about them
- › take time to understand the child's messages (cues) and to respond to them with encouragement, praise, comfort, independence and rest as needed
- › are able to see, share and celebrate the big and small joys and achievements of the children in their care.

Adults provide:

- › *responsive and sensitive care*
- › *a safe and interesting place to be.*

They follow children's lead by supporting their exploration and the things they like to do.

There is no set list of things to teach babies and young children.

Living is learning and children learn through living. All children and babies have their own abilities and interests. Follow the child's lead.

Watch and listen; provide opportunities; give support; build on each child's strengths. Babies and children also come from family and cultural backgrounds that are part of the way they are and need to be included in their experiences. These books will help you to provide the best start for the children in your care.



About sleep

Having a new baby is wonderful and exciting and one of the most tiring times in a parent's life. So it's no wonder that anyone caring for a baby thinks about how to get enough sleep. This book will help you to understand about babies' and young children's sleep needs and how best to help them, as well as helping you to get enough sleep yourself. It won't guarantee perfect nights for parents—parenting little ones is a full-on job—but it will help you to meet your child's important needs and, at the same time, take care of yourself.

Eighty per cent of the world's parents, who sleep with their babies and have them with them most of the day as well, don't have sleep problems. Their babies always have parents near and cry very little. In our Western societies babies are often put in separate rooms to sleep by themselves. Because babies get their security from being with a parent, they cry for longer periods and can be hard to settle. Parents who expect eight hours unbroken sleep at night are likely to think their baby has a sleep problem, when it is really just a baby being a baby.

What parents need to know

When we understand more about how children and babies sleep it becomes easier to manage. By six months only about 50 per cent of babies sleep through the night. About 40 per cent wake at night at one year of age, and it is not until about age three that most children feel confident enough to sleep through most nights. Waking at night is normal for the very young. If this pattern continues into middle childhood it can be a sign that something else might be going wrong for the child.

'Waking at night is normal for the very young.'



Sleeping through the night?

Sleeping for five hours, usually about midnight till 5.00am, is considered sleeping through the night for babies. This is not the eight hours parents may wish for, but it is how babies are. (Some babies will sleep for longer though.)



Sleep cycles

There are two kinds of sleep – deep sleep and lighter sleep called REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. Deep sleep is the time when the body grows and heals, and light sleep is when we dream and ‘work through’ what has happened during the day. Both kinds of sleep are important.

Babies have much more light sleep than adults do, so they are more likely to awaken. Adults have about four-hour sleep cycles, which means that every four hours or so we have a time of lighter sleep when we might stir a bit, or turn over and go back to sleep again. If we have any worries, or are cold or hungry, it can be hard to get back to sleep. In babies, lighter sleep happens about every three-quarters of an hour. This is when they might wake right up if everything isn't just right for them and/or they need some help to re-settle. Toddlers usually take about an hour for each sleep cycle. This gradually changes as they grow older so, by adolescence, their sleep patterns are more like adults’.



'Sleep is very individual and sleep time varies a lot at any age.'



How much sleep do babies and children need?

Sleep is very individual and sleep time varies a lot at any age.

0–3 months

- Newborns generally wake frequently, between 1–3 hourly, needing a feed and attention.
- Sleep needs change quickly as they grow. Many babies sleep 14–20 hours a day in the first weeks.
- By six weeks, 25 per cent of babies are sleeping a straight five-hour stretch, not necessarily at night.
- By three months, most babies have longer times awake during the day and longer sleep times at night. At three months babies go into a deep sleep more quickly than when they were younger.

3–6 months

- Some babies have two or three longish sleeps during the day, while others just have short naps.
- Some may sleep 12 hours without interruption; a few manage eight hours. However, remember sleeping through is 'five hours'.
- Many wake fairly regularly, usually for a feed.

6 months–3 years

- › Some babies and toddlers sleep through the night.
- › Many still wake at night, often more than once.
- › At two to three years, 41 per cent of young children are still waking once or twice a night, a few waking more often.

3–6 years

- › A wide range of sleep patterns is normal. So if your preschool child is still waking at night you are not on your own!
- › Most children need about 10–12 hours sleep at night.
- › Bedtimes vary a lot. Some children go to bed at 6.30pm, others stay up until 9.30pm or later. Often those who go to bed later wake up later.
- › Young children may still need a daytime sleep as well, but by preschool age only a few are still having this.



Where should babies sleep?

Some babies sleep in a cot next to their parents, or in a cot adapted to clip onto the side of the bed. Others sleep in separate rooms. Young babies are safest if they sleep in the same room as their parents.

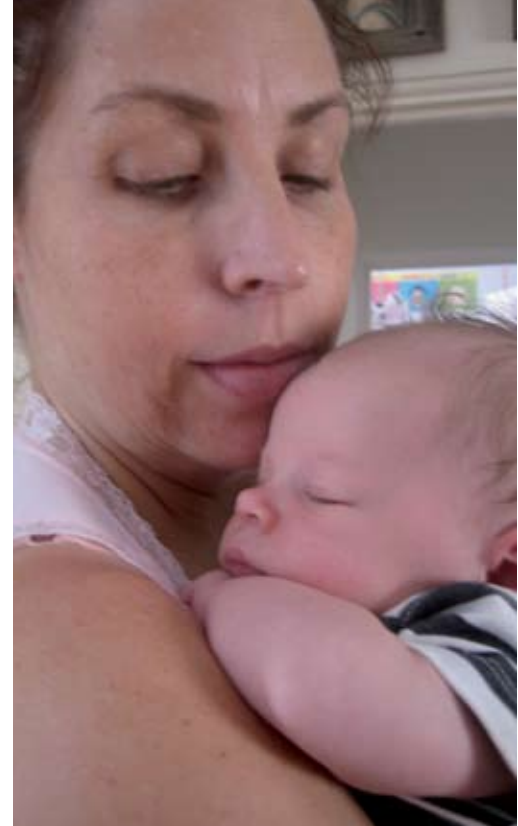
In many families around the world babies sleep with their parents. Sleeping with your baby or toddler will not form a habit for life and is very reassuring for babies. Most children will move out of parents' beds before they go to primary school, often much earlier.

In our society, where we generally have soft beds and lots of bedding, you need to be sure that your bed is safe for your baby, just as you need to be sure that a cot is safe for your baby.

It is not safe to sleep with your baby if you:

- are overweight
- have been drinking, taking drugs or smoking
- are very tired.

It is not safe for babies to sleep with other children. Wherever your baby sleeps, make sure that he cannot get caught in the bedding or a gap between the bed and wall, or slide down under bedclothes. Babies should not sleep with pillows, doonas or soft toys, and it is unsafe to go to sleep with a baby on a sofa.



'Young babies are safest if they sleep in the same room as their parents.'

`... as they are safe and feel secure and loved, *where* they sleep will not interfere with *how* they sleep.'

See www.cyh.com topics 'Sleeping with your baby', 'Safe Sleep' and 'SIDS' for more information.

If you are parenting alone, sleeping with your toddler or young child can make it difficult for them if you later have another partner and the child has to move out of your bed. Sleeping separately leaves the way open for you to have other relationships as well as your special relationship with your child. This helps the child to develop her own individuality.

If you are going back to work, or you can't get a routine into your life, don't worry. Routines can make your day easier, but babies and children all over the world sleep in all sorts of places. They sleep in baby slings, on their mother's back, on the floor, and in cars – and, as long as they are safe and feel secure and loved, *where* they sleep will not interfere with *how* they sleep. Some things that are important are:

- › someone to love them and respond to their needs
- › the same one or two people usually putting them to sleep when they are very young
- › a safe sleeping place
- › familiar sleep associations—songs, patting, etc. (see next section).



Sleep associations

Sleep associations are the things we do when we are preparing to go to sleep. They can be things such as having a glass of water by the bed, reading, and so on. Babies learn to associate going to sleep with the way they usually fall asleep. So if they always fall asleep on the breast they may associate the breast with going to sleep. If this works for you it is a great way to get your baby to sleep. Or if they sleep in a quiet, dark room they may need a quiet, dark room to help them sleep.

If your baby is going to be cared for by someone else at sleep times it will help if she has sleep associations that don't always need you to be there. Have a look at the suggestions that follow and try some that could be done by another person. If you are not there it often helps if your baby has something that smells like you, such as an old t-shirt, for a covering.



Some sleep associations:

- Some babies feel more secure if they are wrapped in a thin cotton sheet. Try to wrap their arms so they can reach their mouth if they want to. Many babies suck their fists to comfort themselves.
- Many babies find dummies a comfort, but it is advised not to use them until breastfeeding is going well (usually around 4-6 weeks), as it can make it harder for the baby to learn how to suck from the breast. If you don't like the idea of dummies it is best not to start using them. Once children become attached to a dummy they usually need it at separation times until they are about age three, and it can be quite stressful for toddlers if parents take the dummy away before they are ready.
- If you want your baby to learn to sleep alone, put her into the cot awake but sleepy, and help her to go to sleep by patting, singing, etc.—whatever comforts her. If she cries when you leave, go back and comfort again. This is helping her to learn that she is not alone and you are there when she needs you.

'This is helping her to learn that she is not alone and you are there when she needs you.'

Changing sleep associations

There is nothing wrong with holding or feeding your baby as she goes to sleep. It is very reassuring for the baby. If you don't want to change what you are doing until your baby is older, don't worry about it.

If you do want to change, it is best to do so gradually so it is less stressful for baby. Work out some simple steps to gradually change the association. For example, if the baby is going to sleep on the breast and you are still breastfeeding, as a first step you might try taking her off when you can see she has had enough to drink and just cuddle her as she goes off to sleep. If your baby gets upset, leave it for a few days and try again. Sometimes it helps if someone else, such as the baby's father, puts her to sleep for a while.

'You can start your bedtime rituals when your baby is very young and change as needed as he grows.'



Bedtime rituals

Rituals are things we do that have special meaning for us. Rituals help us cope with changes that can make us anxious. Daily rituals are things such as how we say goodbye in the morning and how we say goodnight, etc.

Following a ritual when you put your baby down will help him to learn about going to sleep. It says to babies and children that it is sleep time now and helps them begin to relax.

Families have their own special rituals for children, and they can be as different as families are; but here are some suggestions you might want to try.

- Bedtime song (same one each night).
- Bedtime story (two-year-olds may want the same story each night).
- Goodnight prayer.
- Some music – babies often respond to soothing music that is not too loud or upbeat, e.g. classical music.
- Goodnight cuddle and kiss.

You can start your bedtime rituals when your baby is very young and change as needed as he grows. Children often don't want much change—it is the familiarity of loved rituals that helps them most.

Sleep problems

When parents have problems with their young child's sleep it is likely to be due to one or more of the following reasons:

- › Expecting babies to sleep longer or better than they do.
- › Not understanding babies' signals for when they are tired, when they need comfort, etc.
- › Not having comforting rituals to help them get off to sleep.
- › The baby or child's fear of being alone.
- › Pain (e.g. earache, teething).
- › Family stress (babies and very young children are particularly vulnerable to parental stress).
- › Sometimes (rarely) there is an underlying developmental problem.

The main issue for parents is tiredness. It is important to consider all the issues above and then look at ways where the child's needs and the parents' needs can both be best met.





Babies' needs have not changed over the centuries, even though the world they live in has. Babies still need to be protected from danger, fed when they are hungry, and responded to, loved and nurtured so they can grow up healthy and secure.



'Babies' needs have not changed over the centuries, even though the world they live in has.'

Baby cues

Babies depend on adults to help them manage their bodies and their feelings. They give us signals (cues) about what they need, and, as parents learn to understand their own babies' cues, they are able to care for them more confidently. This takes time—watching and being with and learning to know your baby.

Responding to these cues sensitively helps to make your baby secure, confident and happy.

The strongest cue is crying—babies need to be attended to straight away when they cry so they learn that there is someone to meet their needs and that the world is a safe place to be in. Young babies don't understand that you exist when they can't see or feel you, so they can be quite panic-stricken if no-one comes. *They never cry to 'manipulate' you—only because they need something.*

In cultures where infants are almost continually in contact with caregivers they typically cry for only a few seconds at a time. In Australia, where caregiving consists of less carrying and more separation, infants may cry for long periods.

'Crying is the only way that babies can let you know they are distressed, and it is important for their survival.'

When you are trying to understand your baby's cry there may be other clues to his needs; for example is it a long time since a feed or sleep, has he been moved around a lot, does he need a nappy change, are there a lot of people around and confusing things happening?

Crying is the only way that babies can let you know they are distressed, and it is important for their survival.

Sleep cues

Some signs to help you know when your baby is tired include:

- yawning
- agitated jerky movements
- fussing
- turning her head away
- crying
- rubbing her eyes and face.

Over-tired babies sometimes look very alert, wide-eyed and agitated. It is hard to get an over-tired baby to sleep, so you need to watch for the earlier cues.



Settling difficulties

If your baby finds it hard to go off to sleep, here are some things you can try.

- Check that baby is not too hot or cold, and clothing is not too tight.
- Settle your baby on her back where she sleeps and then pat her gently. You can pat the mattress next to her, or gently pat or stroke her chest or her thigh. You can start patting quickly, and then slow down as your baby calms, normally to about the pace of your heartbeat.
- Rock baby in a pram or bassinet. Or hold him in your arms for a while.
- Try giving your baby a warm bath.
- Offer another feed, sometimes called a 'top-up' feed.
- Allow baby to suck on a dummy or thumb; you may have to hold the dummy in gently at first until he gets the idea. (Avoid dummies if you can in the early weeks of breastfeeding.)
- Go for a walk with your baby in the pram. The bumps on the footpath are generally soothing for babies.
- Use a baby sling, so he will be close to your heart and hear it beat. This helps baby settle and allows you to do something yourself.
- Talk in soft, rhythmic sounds, such as 'Sh-sh-sh, Sh-sh-sh'.
- Hold baby against you with his head over your shoulder.
- Sing to your baby or play some music that your baby likes.





In the daytime, you could try feeding your baby and then having a short play and cuddle before settling her down. But watch for baby's cues and make sure she doesn't get over-stimulated or over-tired. Babies let you know when they don't want to play any more by turning away, frowning, closing their eyes or crying. A short playtime during the day, when your baby is alert and interested, helps her learn that daytime is playtime. At night, feed your baby in a darker, quiet place and settle her to sleep without play.



Older babies

6 months–3 years

Your baby will now be eating solid foods and his day will look more like your day, with three meals, some in-between snacks, and a morning and afternoon sleep. Your baby will be enjoying lots more playtime.

Around six months is the age when babies learn that you exist even when they can't see or hear you, and they may become very anxious if they are apart from their special people for any length of time—often especially at bedtime. This is a normal part of development, called separation anxiety. Babies and toddlers don't understand when you say you will be back in the morning; they just know that they need you. This is a time when they need extra reassurance. Some babies need you to stay with them until they fall asleep. Often patting, rocking and singing a mantra (a repetitive song with a few words) such as 'Hush-a-bye baby' can help. A lot depends on temperament. Some babies don't seem to mind going to sleep by themselves at all.

'This is a time when they need extra reassurance.'



Maintain your baby's sleep ritual.

A dummy or special blanket will help, if he has one.

Toddlers need exercise. Having somewhere to run every day helps them sleep.

It is important to respond to your toddler's or baby's cues. If your baby fusses a bit when she is going to sleep, it might just be her way of getting settled for the night. However, if she cries, you need to go to her straight away to make sure she is alright and reassure her by whatever means work best for her and you. This way she will learn that she is safe and that you will not leave her.

Going back to work

If you have just started back at work, it might be harder to settle your baby. If he has missed you during the day he needs to catch up on parent time. It is likely that he will breastfeed more often in the evening. You might find it helps you both if you lie down with him when you are putting him to sleep, and have a rest yourself. Parenting time is very important for young children and, even if you have to let some other things go, you are giving your child what he needs.

'There is no 'right' time to change your child from a cot to a bed.'

Changing from a cot to a bed

There is no 'right' time to change your child from a cot to a bed. Some parents keep their toddlers in a cot because it has rails to prevent the child from falling out. A good time to change might be when your child starts to climb out of the cot. It isn't a good time if there are family stresses or there is a new baby who is going to take over the cot.

When you do change, a low bed is best at first, and, if your child is likely to fall out, you might need a rail or to put cushions on the floor by the bed. Or you could start with a mattress on the floor. Bunk beds aren't safe for young children. Involve your toddler in the change. She can help you to choose sheets and a bedcover. You might want to leave the cot in the room at first and let her choose where she sleeps. If you can then put the bed in the same place the cot was, it will help the child to know where she is if she wakes at night.

Maintain all the special sleep rituals that your child is used to. You might leave a low light on if your child wants it, and make sure she has any special things she takes to bed with her. And, if she really doesn't want to change yet, the best thing to do is leave it for a while – if you can.



Settling difficulties

- Put your chair by the cot or bed and pat your baby. If she cries when you stop, change the timing of the patting – slow it down and make it softer; then just rest your hand on her body.
- Some older babies still feel more secure if they are wrapped in a thin cotton sheet.
- If you want your child to learn to sleep by herself you can try gradual separation. Put her in her cot and pat her or sing to help her to go to sleep. When she has become used to that, try sitting by the cot and singing or reading aloud but not patting. Then move your chair a little way from the cot. Keep gradually withdrawing farther until you are outside the door but baby still knows you are there. This gradual separation takes time, but it is a way that reassures your baby while she goes to sleep.

Second baby

Children often start waking at night again when the next baby comes along and they lose their special place in the family. This is the time to let your partner care for the baby sometimes while you spend time with your toddler. Keep your bedtime rituals going and try to make time for the extra cuddles your child needs. Housework will wait and young children need you now. Expect some need for extra comforting at night, and try to get help so you can catch up on your own sleep needs. Other people like to be helpful, and asking for time for a rest is one good way they can assist you.

‘... let your partner care for the baby sometimes while you spend time with your toddler.’

3–6 years

By three years old children can usually manage longer times away from you and understand that you will always come back in the morning and be there if they need you.

Going to bed

- For a child, going to bed can mean going off on your own and leaving behind all the interesting things that are happening in the house.
- Children may be fearful of being left alone.
- If children are having trouble going to bed it may be because something has worried or frightened them during the day. Children are especially sensitive to parental worries or anger, so they are likely to be very upset by this and even blame themselves.
- A very busy or exciting day, or too much excitement just before bed, may make it hard for your child to sleep.

Of course, children may object to going to bed simply because they are not tired yet. In this case, they will probably go to bed quite happily later on. But if the problem is fear or worry, they will still be unhappy no matter what time you put them to bed.

To help children prepare for bed, a wind-down time and a familiar ritual is still important. Start with letting your child know that it is nearly bedtime and give her some time to finish what she is doing. Plan the rest of the ritual around what is special for you and your child. Before bed is not a good time for tickles, TV or other excitement. A very busy or exciting day or too much excitement just before bed may make it hard to sleep.

Having put your child to bed, she may not want to stay there. So perhaps she could have something quiet to do in bed; e.g. look at a book or listen to soft music or a story tape. If she wants to talk about something that is worrying her, you could sit on the bed and listen. Once she has relaxed, you can build trust and confidence by saying you will pop in every few minutes to check on her – but make sure that you do, even if you think she is asleep.

Note: Going to bed early can mean your child wakes early in the morning—unfortunately, you can't have it both ways.

Night waking

Night waking is normal in the early years. But parents also need their sleep, and there are some things you can do to make sure that your own sleep is as unbroken as possible. Remember, most babies sleep better if they know that a parent is close by. It is safer to have your baby in a cot next to your bed for the first six to twelve months.

Some ways to help with this might include taking the baby into your bed or putting a spare bed or mattress near baby's bed, so you can comfort her and still rest yourself.

0–3 months

It is common for young babies to wake at least two or three times at night for feeds. They need this to be healthy and secure. It is part of parenting a baby.

3–6 months

Many babies wake at night for at least one night feed; some who have previously slept through begin to wake when their appetite increases. They usually settle quickly when they are getting more milk.

To help reduce night feeds at this age, you could try a 'roll-over feed' at about 10pm, or before you go to bed. Disturb your baby as little as possible; lift her without fully waking, and feed.



6 months–3 years

Many children of this age wake at night. Separation anxiety is a very common reason for children under three to cry at night. If your child is waking for this reason, he will usually go back to sleep if you stay with him.

But there can be more serious causes of night waking; for example, family stress, or physical pain. Pain, such as earache or teething, often results in night waking. A child in pain may not settle even if you are there, or he may settle for a short while and then cry. If your child suddenly starts crying at night, you need to think about teething or earache and check with your doctor.

If you are breastfeeding at night and want your older baby to stop waking for a feed, it will help if her father does the night comforting for a while and you sleep in another room. This helps her learn to feed more during the day and not need night feeds. But, if this solution is upsetting for your baby, leave it for a while and try again later.

Toddlers are very sensitive to angry voices and family tension, and family stress during the day can cause problems for the child at night.

'Separation anxiety is a very common reason for children under three to cry at night.'





3–6 years

Night waking is still common. The inner confidence to feel secure when parents are not present is still developing until the child is three or four years old. Night waking caused by separation anxiety usually lessens by about age four.

Children may need help to go back to sleep when they are sick, lonely, sad or frightened. Changes such as moving, starting school, separations or family tensions can all affect your child's sleep.

Here are some suggestions:

- Have a relaxing ritual at bedtime (see p. 12).
- When your child wakes, go to him and quietly reassure him that everything is all right. Say something like 'Sleep time now', give him a kiss, and walk out of the room. If this worries him, you could say that you will come back in a few minutes and check on him. Make sure that you do return. After a few nights your child should be reassured and able to sleep more easily.
- Try putting a spare bed in your child's room so that you can be comfortable and rest while your child needs you close.
- Put a small mattress and sleeping bag next to your bed (get the child to help you). Settle your child in his own bed, but let him know he can come into your room and 'camp out' in the sleeping bag if he wakes up at night and needs to be close to you.
- You might all get a better night's sleep if you allow the child to come into your bed or you have a single bed next to your own that the child can settle in. Most children no longer need to share their parents' bed or bedroom by the time they are four or five, unless something stressful is happening in their lives.

Going to bed – preschoolers

- Make sure that your child has regular individual time with you during the day.
- Have a regular bedtime that gets later as she needs less sleep.
- If a child is very close to one parent, it sometimes helps if that parent has special quiet play with the child before bedtime. Then the other parent puts her to bed.
- Sometimes children will fall asleep where they are, and can be carried to their own beds later. Make sure they are fully asleep before putting them in their own bed.
- Settling your child to sleep could become your own relaxation time—take a book to read, or listen to a CD, and sit in a comfortable chair near your child.
- Some things to help children feel less lonely in bed:
 - leave a light on
 - let them have a cuddly toy
 - play soft music or leave a radio playing quietly
 - leave the door open.

Coming and going

If your child is anxious about being left at bedtime you can try 'coming and going'. You sit by the child and then say 'I just have to go and do something (such as check the heater, put the dog out) – I will be right back.' Then you go out for just a minute and return. Over time you can gradually extend the time you are out, but always return before your child gets upset. Eventually he will be asleep before you come back, but you still return and whisper 'Good-night, Daddy (or Mummy) loves you.'



Older children

Sleep problems with older children are likely to be caused by worries or health issues. A comforting bedtime ritual still helps, and sitting on the end of your child's bed while he tells you about his day is both relaxing and helpful with worries.

You can help by giving your child some control over what happens at bedtime; for example whether the door is open or shut, whether he wants music or quiet, whether he wants a light on, whether he wants you to come and check him from time to time, and so on.

Nightmares are frightening dreams. Children usually waken and need comfort after a nightmare. If your children have nightmares often, think about what else is happening in their lives and see how you can reduce any stresses.

Night terrors are different from nightmares and happen in the deepest part of sleep so the child has no memory of them. Sometimes they happen when a child is unwell, but often there is no obvious reason. If you try to wake your child it may make him more agitated. However, you need to stay with him until the night terror goes away and he returns to quiet sleep, often without fully waking.

If your child has night terrors at about the same time each night, you could try going to him about half an hour before they usually happen and touch him gently and almost, but not quite, wake him. Say something like 'Mummy loves you; sleep well', and let him go back to sleep. For some children this seems to prevent the night terror.

Sleep-walking also happens in the deepest part of sleep. The important thing is to make sure your child is safe. Check that he cannot do anything dangerous, such as walking outside, while he is asleep. It can be hard to wake a sleep-walking child, and you don't need to. Just help him back to bed; then, if he does wake, it won't do any harm. Children usually grow out of sleep-walking, and it is not usually a sign that anything is wrong. However, if the sleepwalking could be caused by stresses or health problems in the child's life, you need to deal with them.

'You can help by giving your child some control over what happens at bedtime.'



Controlled crying

Controlled crying (controlled comforting) or 'sleep training' means leaving babies to cry for short and then gradually longer intervals in order to teach them not to cry. Some parents find controlled crying helps them to have good sleep themselves. It does not mean that the baby feels OK, but it may mean that the baby gives up crying for help. For other parents it does not work, or causes so much distress for the parent and the baby that they don't go on with it. When parents respond sensitively to their baby's cries and meet their needs, babies do better in every way. If a parent responds to crying in the daytime, but not at night, it sends a message to the baby that she cannot trust adults to always be there to help her when she is distressed.

Looking after yourself

Broken sleep makes everyone exhausted.

- Ask for help from family and friends.
- Get some rest during the day.
- Take a short break from parenting now and then – do something you enjoy.
- Try to get some regular exercise.
- If you need personal help ring a friend, or ring Parent Helpline or Lifeline.

Sometimes babies have sleep problems when the parent who is caring for them is depressed. If you feel sad or irritable a lot of the time, or you are having trouble sleeping yourself, check with your doctor.

Babies crying can sometimes arouse very strong feelings in parents. If you feel that you might hurt your child, make sure she is safe and then leave the room until you feel you can manage again. Leave your baby with someone if possible. Think about seeing a child health professional or counsellor so that you and your baby can get help.



Remember

Lack of sleep does not last forever; but what you do to give your child a safe and secure start in life lasts for a lifetime. Babies and young children don't cry for nothing; they cry because they need you to help and comfort them; and responding to them promptly, confidently and lovingly is what good parenting is all about.

The suggestions in this book should help you and your baby to get a better sleep. However, the nature of babies means that parenting is a 24-hour-a-day job at the start. But this time goes quickly, and the effort you put in to help your baby feel secure and confident is well worth it.

Suggested further reading

Child and Youth Health website: www.cyh.com

Gethin, A, & Macgregor, B. (2007). *Helping your baby to sleep: Why gentle techniques work best*. Lane Cove, NSW: Finch Publishing.

McKay, P. (2006). *Sleeping like a baby*. Camberwell, Vic: Penguin Books.

Stevens, H. (2006). *Safe sleep space: A gentle, loving approach for helping infants and children find sleep*. Eltham, Vic: Rebus Press.

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