

# HELPING YOUR BABY OR TODDLER SLEEP



## Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Sometimes it feels like your baby will never sleep through the night, and you might wonder if you'll ever get a good night's rest. Many young children have trouble learning how to fall asleep or stay asleep. If your family is having a difficult time at bedtime, you're not alone! The **Early Connections team** has some tips that may help.

## How much sleep does a baby need?

The number of hours a baby needs to sleep depends on their age and health. Each baby will sleep at different hours of the day and night. It is common for newborns and very young babies to only sleep for an hour or two at a time. This means they don't have a set sleep schedule yet. As babies grow, they will start to sleep for longer periods of time.

The following is a recommendation of how much sleep your baby/toddler may need to stay healthy and happy:

Age	Hours of sleep including naps
4 to 12 months	12 to 16 hours
1 to 2 years old	11 to 14 hours
3 to 5 years old	10 to 13 hours

## Day and night

Help your baby understand the difference between day and night. In the daytime, play and talk to them when they are awake. At night, keep the lights dim and speak softly.



## SAFE SLEEP TIPS FROM DOCTORS

- Always put your baby on their back to sleep to help keep their breathing safe.
- Use a firm mattress, with no pillows, blankets, or stuffed animals in the crib for the first year. A sleep sack can help keep your baby warm.
- When your baby can roll over, let them sleep in any position they feel comfortable.
- For the first 6 months, have your baby sleep near you, but on their own sleep surface, like a bassinet or a playpen.



## Bedtime routines

Doing the same activities every night helps children learn a bedtime routine. A night routine helps children feel safe and it teaches them to fall asleep. Here are some ideas to help your child sleep better:

1. Pick a bedtime that works for your family and helps your baby get enough sleep. Try to keep this bedtime the same each night.
2. Start the bedtime routine about an hour before bed.
3. Turn off all the screens.
4. Nurse, offer a bottle or snack.
5. Give your child a bath or wash up and brush their teeth. For a baby you can rub their gums with a damp cloth.
6. Cuddle and read books or sing songs—all babies love hearing your voice.
7. Put your baby in the crib or bed when they're drowsy but not asleep. This will help them fall back asleep if they wake up during the night. Some babies suck on a pacifier or their fingers to fall asleep or soothe themselves back to sleep.
8. After your baby's first year, a special toy or blanket can help them feel safe at bedtime.
9. If your baby sleeps in the same room with you, place them in their bed and go to another room or area if you can. Children may need a quiet space while they fall asleep.



## Waking up at night

Everyone wakes up during the night, even babies! If your baby is fussing, wait a few minutes to see if they settle back to sleep on their own. If not, check if they need a diaper change or a nighttime feeding. Keep the lights dim and speak quietly to avoid waking them.

After checking on them, help them settle back to sleep. You can reassure them with your voice or sit next to them. If needed, gently pat them while they're in their crib or bed. If they need extra help, the last option is to pick them up and hold them.

If your baby wakes up a lot at night, think about how they're falling asleep. If you rock your baby to sleep or feed them to sleep, they may get surprised when they wake up in a different place. Letting your baby fall asleep on their own will teach them how to fall back to sleep by themselves when they wake up.





## Things to keep in mind

If your baby is sick or going through a stressful time, their sleep might change. You can give them extra comfort at night to help them feel safe. If sleep problems continue, look at the bedtime routine to see if anything needs to change.

**Snoring:** If your baby is snoring or breathing loud in their sleep, talk to your baby's doctor or nurse. Babies that snore may need a sleep study. It can also help if you record the sounds your baby makes while they sleep, so your doctor can hear them.

Sometimes, after trying everything, your baby may not settle into a good sleep routine. If this is making you tired and frustrated, it's okay to ask for help. Your baby's doctor or a mental health provider can give you tips that fit your family's needs.

## Where can I find online resources for more support?



### Baby Sleep

Pediatric Sleep Council  
[www.babysleep.com](http://www.babysleep.com)



### Healthy Children: Sleep – English

American Academy of Pediatrics  
[www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/default.aspx)

## STEIN TIKUN OLAM EARLY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL LOS ANGELES

4650 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027 • CHLA.org