Babies don’t understand that they need sleep. They need help to relax and fall asleep



It is hard when your baby doesn’t sleep. Both you and your baby get worn out. You both need sleep! To find out why your baby isn't sleeping, you should check that everything is as it should be:

- Is your baby hungry?
- Does your baby need changing?
- Is your baby too hot or too cold?
- Could your baby be ill (have a fever), growing pains, be teething or be upset for some other reason?
- Has anything changed at home?

If everything is as it should be, look for anything else that could affect how your baby is feeling today.

Why do babies have trouble sleeping?

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An overtired child sleeps poorly

Children become overtired quickly. In fact, when you can see that the child is tired, by yawning or rubbing their eyes, the child may already be overtired. The younger the child, the shorter the transition from tired to overtired.

An overtired child is difficult to put to bed. They may feel restless and very awake. When they finally fall asleep, it often doesn't take long before they wake up again.

If you notice that your child is overtired, try to think about the early signs you saw that indicated they were tired. Maybe you can put them to bed earlier the next evening?

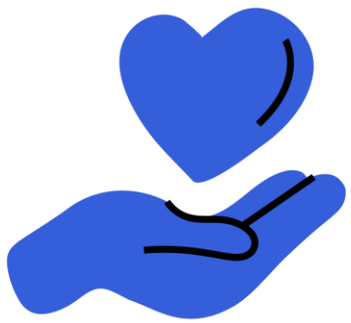
Early signs of tiredness can include:

- The child loses interest in toys or activities
- Becomes more clingy or whiny
- Redness around the eyes
- The child has poorer coordination and more clumsy movements

For many children, it is ideal to be put to bed 20 minutes before they seem really tired, but remember that children are very different, so this might not be the right approach for your child!

Adults can also experience this. Imagine lying on the couch feeling very tired, but not going to bed. When you finally go to bed, you feel more and more awake. Eventually you fall asleep, but you sleep very lightly and wake up many times during the night.

What early signs of tiredness can you see in your child?



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Most babies need time to wind down...



What is the most effective way of calming your baby?

Some tips to help your baby wind down before bedtime:

- Avoid screentime the last hours before sleep
- Feed them
- Rock them
- Push them in a pram
- Lay them in a quiet, dark place
- Read them a story
- Speak to them in a calm, quiet voice
- Sing to them softly
- Put on some soft music
- Bathe them
- Swaddle them in a blanket

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Sleep problems

All babies swap between active and calm sleep. Some may wake up around once an hour. In that case, they will need help to fall back to sleep and return to a calm sleeping state.

Use a step-by-step method to help your baby get back to sleep. Try the first step. Wait a few seconds. See if they fall asleep again. If they are still awake, try the next step. Continue taking one step at a time until your baby falls asleep again.



Step-by-step method for helping your baby to go back to sleep*

1. Stand beside their cot without saying or doing anything
2. Place your hand gently on your baby's tummy. Gently encircle your baby’s arms.
3. Place your other hand gently around your baby’s feet. This reassures your baby in its cot.
4. Give your baby a dummy/pacifier (if they use one)
5. Speak softly to your baby
6. Stroke and caress your baby
7. Pick up your baby
8. Rock your baby

* Note! This step-by-step method doesn’t work if the baby is hungry or ill, needs changing or burping, or there is something else wrong. Make sure your baby has everything it needs. You can then help them go back to sleep.

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Did you know that toddlers...

Often don’t want to go to bed? They are social creatures and prefer to be where the action is!

Find a place where your child can sleep undisturbed. Don't have a television, games console or other electronic devices in the room where your child sleeps.

Some toddlers like to listen to soft music or lullabies!



Young children can have nightmares and night terrors

- Night terrors are completely harmless. During a night terror episode, the child may cry inconsolably and seem very scared. The child usually remembers nothing of the episode the next morning. Night terrors occur early in the night. The child is asleep, even though they seem completely awake. Night terrors can be frightening for the family if they don’t know what it is. Parents are advised to stay calm and not wake the child. Such episodes often occur during periods when the child is experiencing many new impressions, such as transitioning to a new daycare group or large family gatherings.
- Children can also suffer from nightmares. These often occurs in the last part of the night. If your child suffers from nightmares, it needs to be reassured. Tell the child that nightmares are not real. Go to them quickly and comfort them whenever a nightmare occurs.
- Let them have a cuddly toy or similar item in bed with them, as an additional comforter.
- A little night light and open doors between the bedrooms can also help.

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