

FAMILY WELLNESS

Bedtime Tips for Young Children

- The challenges of sleep
- Tips to try
- Resources to learn more



Looking for the secret formula for magical sleep? There isn't one.

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a "recipe" of sorts to follow that would lead to perfect sleep every night? Unfortunately, that's just not reality.

Bedtime needs change from child-to-child and day-to-day. Even with the perfect routine, it's reasonable for children to need adult support at bedtime--as well as in the middle of the night--well into childhood.

One of the best things to do as the parent or caregiver is to adjust our own expectations. When we feel prepared to spend a chunk of time helping our children settle in for the night, bedtime

outines can become a lovely time of connection and winding down for both children and adults, rather than a frustrating power struggle that is only "won" when the child is sleeping.

Working together with our child(ren) to figure out their physical and emotional needs at bedtime, and meeting them accordingly, can empower families to enjoy their bedtime routines and end the day on a positive note.

While there really isn't a secret formula, consider these tips and discover what works for your family.



Tips to try

Some suggestions for an easier bedtime

Keep things consistent

Even very young children benefit from a predictable bedtime routine so that each next step can feel expected and comfortable. Follow the same routine each night, ideally with the same caregiver as often as possible

Fill those Tummies

Diet throughout the day largely impacts sleep. Take a look at what your child is eating and be sure that they are getting enough protein and not too much sugar. Consider a filling bedtime snack--1/2 an apple, a piece of toast with peanut butter, etc--so that children don't feel hungry at bedtime.

Use sound

Many children sleep best with white noise in the background.

This can also help "light sleepers" keep from waking from noise in the house after they've gone to sleep. Research suggests that "pink" noise is best for sleep. Instrumental music is also calming to many children and can be used together with the white noise--just be sure you're prepared to play the same thing all night every night.

Plan for cuddles

Children often "drag out" bedtime in an effort to have more time to connect with caregivers. We can combat this by planning for some special time together to help children feel that their need for cuddles and connection have been met. Get cozy in the rocking chair, recount the events of the day, read one last story, or sing a special song together.

Set up the environment

Invest in room-darkening curtains and a red-hued night light to support sleep and circadian rhythms. Keep toys and books put away. Babies older than 12 months may enjoy a special blanket or lovey in the bed.

**"GOODNIGHT STARS,
GOODNIGHT AIR, GOODNIGHT
NOISES EVERYWHERE"**

– MARGRET WISE BROWN, GOODNIGHT MOON

Resources

to learn more

- [The Gentle Sleep Book](#) and other resources by [Sarah Ockwell Smith](#)
- [8 tips for better baby and toddler sleep](#)
- [Bedtime tips for any age](#)
- [Product recommendations](#)
- [Bedtime Music](#)

