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Partnerships made for parents

# Understanding Sleep

Quality sleep is important for growth and development, so it's important to assist your toddler in achieving good sleep habits. Responding to your toddler consistently and sensitively can improve sleep quality and duration.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

- Early wake up times. Putting your toddler to bed later at night won't normally help – they will wake up feeling tired.
- Sleeping through the night more often. Disturbed sleeping may still occur.
- Delaying tactics prior to going to bed like wanting a drink, a cuddle or one more story.
- Frequently getting out of bed or asking you to stay with them.
- Your toddler may be afraid of the dark or being alone.
- Some toddlers have night terrors where they scream out and appear awake, but they may still be asleep. Don't try to wake them – help them resettle back to sleep calmly.

## REALITIES

Toddlers are often full of energy, so they may avoid staying in bed. These steps can help:

- Reassure your toddler by saying, " It's ok, it's time for sleep", while in the room or sitting on their bed briefly.
- Go to the door and once again reassure your toddler.
- If your toddler is distressed, offer a cuddle and then once calm, go back to the door and reassure them.
- If your toddler gets out of bed, you will need to take them back to bed every time. Calmly repeat steps 1 to 3 (you may need to repeat several times).
- This can feel frustrating, but the more your toddler gets used to this routine the more successful it will be.

## TIRED SIGNS

Look for signs of tiredness in your toddler. For example:

- Yawning.
- Grizzling or whining.
- Clinginess.
- Clumsiness.
- Becoming bored with playing or toys.

## SAFETY

When your child outgrows their cot (when their shoulders are higher than the cot sides or they are climbing out), it's time to transition to a bed. Add bed rails or cushions on the floor next to the bed while adjusting to the change.




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## TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

- Toddlers respond well to routine and predictability. It helps them feel safe and understand what is coming next.
- Give your toddler lots of opportunities to play each day and exposure to natural light (always be sun safe).
- It can take time to adjust to a new routine, so be patient, calm and responsive.
- Create routines around sleep time, like a bath, quiet time or reading a book.
- Avoid active games and screen time close to bedtime.
- Let your toddler know when it's almost time for bed.
- Make bedtime about the same time every night.
- A dim night light may help your toddler if they're afraid of the dark.
- Put your toddler in bed calmly, kiss them goodnight and let them know you are close by.