

HOW MUCH SLEEP IS ENOUGH FOR MY CHILD?

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- Sleep – or the lack of it – is probably the most discussed aspect of baby care
- New parents discover its vital importance those first few weeks
- The quality and quantity of an infant's sleep affects the well-being of everyone in the household, and it's the difference between having a cheerful, alert parent(s) and members of the walking dead

How Much is enough?

- There is no magical number of hours required by all kids in a certain age group
- Most children's sleep requirements fall within a predictable range of hours based on their age, but remember your child is a unique individual with distinct sleep needs
- Here are some approximate numbers based on age, accompanied by age-appropriate pro-sleep tactics:

The First 6 Months:

- Newborns generally sleep or drowse for 16 to 20 hours a day divided about equally between night and day
- Longest sleep period generally is 4 to 5 hours because this is about how long their bellies can go between feedings
- There is no sleep formula for newborns because their internal clocks are not fully developed
- Babies are not always awake when they sound like they are and they can cry and make all sorts of noises during their light sleep
- Even if they do wake up at night they may only be awake for a few minutes before failing asleep again on their own
- This helps them learn early to get themselves to sleep
- If the baby cries for more than a few minutes then it is time to respond as they may be hungry, cold, wet or even sick
- Try and provide minimal stimulation during this time as you do not want to give the message that nighttime is for play
- Try routines that are soothing and regular for night time behaviors to improve

6 to 12 Months:

- The child will more than likely nap for about 3 hours daily
- You can begin to change your response to your child who awakens and cries during the night
- Give the child about 5 minutes to settle down on their own and go back to sleep
- If they don't fall asleep, comfort them without picking them up by rubbing their backs, etc then leaving when they are settled down
- Between 6 and 12 months separation anxiety may become a major issue for your child
- Help them become attached to a stuffed animal or blanket that will help them with this anxiety

1 to 3 Years:

- For most young children in this age range they will sleep about 10-13 hours per day
- Note the time when your toddler begins to show signs of sleepiness and try and establish this as his regular bedtime
- Don't try and force 2 and 3 year olds to take a nap, unless they get cranky and overly tired during the day
- Establishing a routine at bedtime helps a child relax and get ready for sleep
- Routines should be anywhere between 15 to 30 minutes long and include calming activities such as reading a story, bathing and listening to soft music
- Allow your toddler to make some bedtime choices within the routine such as what PJ's to wear, what stuffed animal will go to bed with them, what music to play as this will allow them a sense of control over the proceedings

Preschoolers:

- These children sleep about 10-12 hours per night, but there is no reason to be completely rigid about which 10 hours they are resulting in no naps, etc.
- Quiet times could be substituted for naps such as occurs in nursery schools and kindergartens
- Nightmares may become more evident during this time so prepare for them

School-Aged Children:

- 6 year old children may need about 11 or 12 hours of sleep each night

- An occasional sources of bedtime difficulties at this age result from the child's need for private time with his/her parents, without siblings around
- This time is a great time to spend this alone time with your child to give them this private time
- The amount of sleep needed decreases with age
- Suggested to allow school aged children to help in choosing their bedtimes on weekends, depending on the events planned for the following day

While there is no sure way to raise a good sleeper, every parent should be encouraged to know that most children have the ability to sleep well. The key is to persevere from early on to establish healthy sleep habits that may last a lifetime.