

What to expect with toddler sleep (1–3 years)

Toddler sleep: How much and when

Toddlers need about 12–13 hours of sleep every 24 hours. That’s usually 10–12 hours at night and 1–2 hours during the day.

A common daily sleep schedule for toddlers might look like this:

- **7.00 am:** Wake up
- **1.00 pm:** Nap of no more than 2 hours
- **3.00 pm:** Wake up
- **8.00 pm:** Bedtime.

All toddlers are different. Your toddler might need more or less sleep than this, or sleep and wake at different times.

Tips for helping your toddler sleep

You can start to address many toddler sleep problems with a consistent bedtime routine.

Most bedtime routines include pre-bed tasks like having a bath and brushing teeth, as well as quiet, enjoyable activities like reading a book or listening to a story. The aim is to keep the atmosphere calm and positive, using affection and praise.

A bedtime routine might look something like this:

- **7.30 pm:** Brush teeth and change nappy
- **7.45 pm:** Quiet time (read a book or tell a story)
- **8.00 pm:** Into bed and kiss goodnight.

At the end of the routine, say goodnight to your child. This is the time to be firm if your child resists. Be clear that it’s now time for sleep, then leave the room straight away.

Here are some more tips to help with some common toddler sleep concerns:

- **Toddlers not wanting to go to bed or to sleep.** Try spending a little more time with your child before lights out, then be firm that it’s time for sleep. Always go to your child if she genuinely needs your attention. See a health professional if you think your child’s sleep issues are caused by stress or anxiety.
- **Toddlers waking up too early.** Some toddlers like to wake up at 5.30 am or 6 am. There isn’t much you can do about this. If you put your toddler to bed later at night in the hope of waking later in the morning, she might still wake up early then be grumpy from too little sleep. Instead, you could try making your bedtime a little earlier instead.

- **Night terrors.** A night terror is when your child suddenly gets very upset while sleeping deeply. Night terrors can be scary for you, but they don't hurt your child. Don't wake your child during a night terror. Wait for the terror to finish then help her settle.
- **Moving to a 'big bed'.** It might be time to move your child from a cot into a bed if she is climbing out of the cot. Make sure your child's bedroom is a safe environment once she's no longer in a cot. A toddler bed or a mattress on the floor away from walls can be a safe way to start. Otherwise, use bed rails on a single bed.
- **Teeth-grinding.** Teeth-grinding at night can be noisy, but it doesn't usually cause any damage to children's teeth. If you're worried about your child's teeth-grinding, take your child to see your medical practitioner or dentist.