

Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits

Healthy sleep habits can help a child feel safe and secure. A baby's sleep patterns are constantly changing as a result of his or her development.



	Birth to 12 months	12–24 months	24–36 months
What to expect	<p>Most newborns will fall asleep easily. They sleep 16–18 hours per day, but may only sleep 1–2 hours at a time. Their sleep pattern can be very unpredictable.</p> <p>By 3–4 months, babies may start sleeping through the night. Their sleep may appear restless, with a lot of movement, twitching, noises, smiling, and sucking. But don't worry—this is normal.</p>	<p>The need for sleep decreases during this time. Most toddlers need between 12 and 14 hours of sleep, including naptime.</p> <p>Children may begin asking you to read, and reread, a favorite book or books.</p> <p>By 12–18 months, many children begin to give up the morning nap and transition to a longer afternoon nap.</p>	<p>Toddlers need about 13–14 hours of sleep throughout a day, including a nap.</p> <p>A toddler may be ready for a bigger bed.</p> <p>Toddlers may try to delay bedtime by requesting drinks, asking for more hugs and kisses, or “just one more” book.</p>

How can you establish healthy sleep habits?

- Have a predictable sleep routine that might include a bath, feeding, diaper change, songs, and books. The nap routine will be shorter and less involved. This signals to your child that the time to sleep is approaching.
- Always put a baby down to sleep on his or her back on a firm surface with no pillows, comforters, crib bumpers or soft stuffed animals.
- Put your baby to bed drowsy, but awake. This helps her learn to fall asleep on her own.
- Wait a few minutes to see if he can go back to sleep if he wakes during the night. If not, check on him but leave the lights low. He may be hungry or wet.
- Consider using a dim night-light to help your child feel more secure.
- Create a quiet, dark, and not too warm sleep environment. Keep TVs, computers, and mobile devices out of children's rooms.
- Have a set bedtime and wake-up time—even on weekends.
- Adjust naps during the day to support your child's bedtime schedule.
- Avoid putting a child to bed with a bottle.

For more information on health sleep habits, see the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse Web site at <http://eiclearinghouse.org>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Early Intervention.

