

Settling for older toddlers

- Try leaving a soft light on, giving a cuddly toy, giving him something of yours to cuddle, e.g. an old T-shirt that has 'your smell' on it. Many still like their dummy at bedtime.
- Some children need you to stay near while they go to sleep. If you decide to do this, don't sneak out without telling your child. This may keep him tense and on edge in case you do it again. You can whisper that you are going to another room and will be back soon. Make sure you do return soon. If your child copes with this you can start taking a bit longer before coming back, but make sure you always return before he gets upset as this builds trust. Even if he has fallen asleep give him a goodnight kiss and whisper 'I came back'.
- When your child settles to bed, but needs you nearby this could become your relaxation time. Take a book to read or a CD and sit in a comfortable chair near your child (you are present but not doing anything that might disturb your child). Over a few nights you could gradually move your chair nearer to the door. Eventually you will be able to put it outside the door so your child can hear you but not see you. This way your child gradually learns to settle when you are not there.

Look after yourself

Broken sleep makes everyone exhausted and irritable.

- Ask for help from family and friends.
- Get some rest during the day.
- Take a short break from parenting now and then.
- Try to get some regular exercise.
- Some people may suggest that you let your baby/toddler 'cry it out' or that you use controlled crying/comforting. Your baby/toddler needs you to respond when he cries, to help him feel safe.

For more information contact

- Local Community Child Health Nurse
- Local Family Doctor
- Ngala Family Resource Centre Helpline
8:00am–8:00pm 7 days a week
Telephone (08) 9368 9368
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 111 546
www.ngala.com.au
- Parent Help Centre/Parenting Line
Telephone (08) 6279 1200 (24hr service)
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 654 432

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sleep
6 months - 3 years



Baby sleep

By six months of age, babies are having most of their sleep at night, but they still need day sleeps. Expect two sleeps a day until 12 to 15 months – then one is usually enough.

Some babies and toddlers sleep through because they can last longer between feeds and hunger does not wake them. Many still wake once or twice, or several times at night. Many wake in the lighter time of sleep, just as we wake (or almost wake). They may, as most adults do, turn over and go back to sleep, or they may cry because they are uncomfortable, afraid or unsettled in some other way, or in the habit of waking up. By six months about 50% of babies are 'sleeping through the night' (i.e. sleeping about five hours or more). Between the ages of two and three years, 41% of young children wake once or twice a night, with a few still waking more often.

Each family needs to respond to night waking in the way that best suits their family. Some parents like to have their baby sleep in a cot next to them, while others prefer their baby to sleep in a separate room. Sleeping in the same room with parents at least until 12 months, is safer for babies because it reduces the risk of SIDS. Many babies will sleep better if they know that someone is close by. If you are happy with the way things are at the moment, do not feel pressured to change.

Babies may cry at night because they:

- are anxious about being separated from their parents
- are hungry, unwell or uncomfortable, teething, or have a cold or ear ache
- are overexcited or stressed
- don't know how to go back to sleep without a feed or a cuddle.

Help your baby to sleep

During the day:

- Spend time with your baby playing, walking, shopping or visiting. Babies need attention and may wake for it at night if they do not get enough during the day. If your day is very hectic your baby may not sleep as well.
- Try a routine, for example: three meals with some snacks, one or two sleeps, and keep feeds separate from sleeping by playing with your child after feeds, before he goes down to sleep. (Remember to watch for tired signs so he does not get over tired.)
- Don't let your child become overtired. Missing out on a day sleep does not usually help the night sleep.
- Encourage your baby to eat and drink well during the day, so that he does not need a night time feed. If you cut down night feeds, your baby's daytime appetite will increase.

At night:

Babies generally find comfort and security in night time rituals (special things you do at bedtime).

- Keep to a regular bedtime ritual, e.g. a bath, quiet play or story, cuddle, soft toy, dummy or other comforter, then bed.
- Put your baby into the cot awake, to help him to go to sleep there. Patting, rocking and singing a monotonous song with a few words like '**bye bye baby, sleep tight baby**', can help.

Settling

- Put your child into the cot awake, this will help him go to sleep there.
- Sing a little song (you may have made one up) or put on some relaxing music.
- Patting and rocking may still work at this age – a chair by the side of the cot or bed may help look after your back. Some babies and toddlers may get used to this and cry as soon as you stop, so change the timing of the patting, slow it down and become softer, finally resting your hand on his body.
- If your baby cries when you leave, it will help him feel more secure if you stay until he is calm. If you try to sneak out it can make babies anxious, and stay awake longer.
- Some babies feel more secure if they are wrapped in a thin cotton sheet.

- If your baby wakes for a night feed, try giving a feed a little while before he usually wakes, for example about 10:00pm without fully waking him up.
- If breastfeeding, lift him, without waking him, and feed.
- If bottle-feeding, feed him without picking him up from the cot, but stay with him while he is feeding.
- Disturb him as little as possible.

Note: Babies under two have some 'growing times' when they are more fussy.

