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.
- 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 she cries, to help her feel safe.

For more information contact:

- Local community child health nurse
  See inside your baby’s purple ‘All About Me’ book
  Look in the phone directory under ‘Child Health Centres’
  Visit www.healthywa.wa.gov.au
- Local family doctor
  Ngala Helpline
  8:00am–8:00pm 7 days a week
  Phone (08) 9368 9368
  Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 111 546*
  www.ngala.com.au
- Parenting WA Line
  Freecall 1800 654 432* (24 hour service)
  www.dlgc.wa.gov.au/parents
- Raising Children Network
  www.raisingchildren.net.au

Kidsafe WA
8:30am–5:00pm (Monday to Friday)
Telephone (08) 9340 8509
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 802 244*
www.kidsafewa.com.au

SIDS and Kids WA
Telephone (08) 9474 3544
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 199 466*
www.sidsandkidswa.org

*Calls made from a mobile may be charged at a timed rate.

This topic may use ‘he’ and ‘she’ in turn - please change to suit your child’s sex.

This information, along with other child health information, is available in electronic format at www.healthywa.wa.gov.au

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability. Please contact childcommunity@health.wa.gov.au

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Babies may cry at night because they:
- don't know how to settle themselves back to sleep without a feed, a cuddle or a dummy
- are hungry, unwell or uncomfortable, teething, or have a cold or ear ache
- are overtired, overexcited or stressed
- are anxious about being separated from their parents.

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. Stop before your baby goes to sleep.

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 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 settle better if wrapped fairly firmly in a thin cotton sheet with the arms wrapped in too, while others do not like this, and settle better if they can use their hands to soothe themselves. The wrap should not be too tight and must allow chest wall, hip and leg movement.

At six months a lot of babies are still waking for a night feed. By 12 months night feeds are no longer necessary.
- If your baby wakes for a night feed, try giving a feed a little while before he usually wakes, for example about 10.00 pm without fully waking him up.
- Disturb him as little as possible.

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