



## **5 Secrets for Helping your Child Sleep Through the Night**

Are you exhausted? Is your baby waking throughout the night leaving you sleep deprived and feeling off your game? A few simple tweaks can make a big difference in helping your little one sleep all night long.

### **Place your baby in the crib calm but awake**

Believe it or not, waking throughout the night is actually normal – adults and children wake as they move from one sleep cycle to the next. The issue, then, is not waking, but being able to put one's self back to sleep without the help of a parent, bottle, rocking, etc. To make this successful, we must put our babies to sleep in the same way that they will wake throughout the night. If you don't want to have to help your baby back to sleep each and every time she wakes during the night, be sure to put her in the crib when she is calm but awake. This way she can do the work of falling asleep all on her own.

### **Use a consistent and predictable routine before naps and night**

Whether it is meditating, reading a book before bed, or listening to calm music, you probably have a bedtime ritual that helps you drift off to dreamland. Children are no different. Parents should create a consistent bedtime routine to be used with their little ones before both naps and nights that will help them wind down and sleep soundly through the night. A consistent bedtime routine creates positive sleep associations that our babies' brains recognize as specific cues for sleep. When the sleep sack zips up and the sound machine turns on, our babies know that sleep time is approaching. Familiarity of that routine sets expectations and boundaries. Children need this type of structure to feel safe and secure and to know what to expect next.

### **Avoid screen time (TV, phone, iPad, etc.) at least 60 minutes before all sleep**

While a consistent bedtime routine is very important for our little ones, screen time should not be part of that routine. The purpose of bedtime rituals is to cue your child to begin to wind down and that it is time for sleep. Screen time actually does the opposite, which is why it is recommended that all screen time be stopped at least 60 minutes before bedtime (and same is true for adults!). Research has found that the blue light emitted from the screen inhibits the production of melatonin, an important hormone needed to induce and sustain sleep. A calming bedtime routine might include reading, calming music, or a quiet game.

### **Keep your baby's room as dark as possible**

A dark room is essential for healthy sleep. The goal is for the room to be cave-like dark. If you need to use a night-light, use a red bulb which does not interfere with melatonin production. Make sure the room is equally dark for naps. Day sleep can be more difficult for babies to master; therefore, having a dark room will help naps become more successful and consistent.

### **Put your baby to sleep before she becomes overtired**

If only we could put our children to sleep later so that the whole family could sleep in the next morning! Although it sounds logical that a later bedtime would result in a later wake time, unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Sleep is biological and not logical! When you keep your children up later at night they become overtired, which makes it harder to settle at bedtime. Overtiredness can also lead to more night wakings, an increased likelihood of night terrors, earlier wake times in the morning, and shorter naps. The solution? Try putting your child to bed a little earlier and see if she wakes any later in the morning. Just 15 minutes can make a difference!