



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TODDLER SLEEP**

### **Q: How much sleep does my toddler really need?**

- Children who are 18 months to three years old need anywhere between 11-14 hours total, between night sleep and day sleep.
- 11-12 of those hours usually occur at night, while 1.5-3 hours happen during the daytime.

### **Q: When is a good time to transition from a crib to a bed?**

- Parents are often surprised to learn that we don't recommend transitioning a child from a crib until they are around three years old.

### **Q: At what age do children tend to give up their naps?**

- There are many children who will begin to drop their nap at around age three years old. They may take a nap one day, then forego the nap the next.
- Some children will continue to take a nap until they are four or five years old. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this. We definitely discourage dropping a child's nap prematurely as this commonly only impacts their sleep nutrition negatively.

### **Q: How do you handle a child who is throwing tantrums at bedtime or insisting on one more book, one more drink of water?**

- First, take a deep breath! This kind of limit-testing behavior is the defining hallmark of children this age. They are learning and practicing their new independence and increased ability to make decisions and get a response from their parents. This is both exciting and frustrating as it shows that your child is advancing in his or her cognitive abilities.
- Start to give your child forced choices (the red pajamas or the green pajamas).
- Build potty time and a small drink of water into the routine.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say (last book means last book!).

**Q: How should parents handle a situation where their child seems fearful at bedtime?**

- Be careful NOT to plant the idea that there is something to be afraid of – namely the dark. We often make assumptions based on our recollections from our own childhoods about fears that aren't accurate, but give children a cause for pause.
- Make sure you give your child enough attention to explore the nature of their fears, reassure them and move on. Giving the fears too much attention might only ensure this becomes an ongoing problem.

**Q: What should a parent do if their child is having a nightmare?**

- Offer comfort and reassurance to your child immediately. They likely will have a hard time distinguishing the nightmare from reality and may need some extra comforting to fall back to sleep. This may be the case the following night as well.

**Q: When should parents get rid of pacifiers for sleeping?**

- By the time your baby is a toddler, it is important to limit pacifier use to the crib for sleeping only. Pacifiers can be a great tool for self-soothing and should be encouraged for children who seem to really like them.
- Generally it seems that getting rid of a pacifier too early can have a negative impact on a child's sleep. Some time between two and four years-old seems to be best.
- Pacifiers should be removed with the child's awareness. Simply taking them away without a child's knowledge can be extremely upsetting and unsettling for children, and it's unnecessary. Children often do well getting rid of pacifiers if there is a ritual and choice about it.
- Be sure not to get rid of a pacifier when there is a big change (developmental or familial).

**Q: Why is good quality sleep so important for a toddler?**

- Children's brains and bodies are growing when they sleep. This is when growth hormones are released. This is also when the body and mind are restoring and when learning is integrated.
- Toddlers who don't get naps, for instance, are less attentive, have a harder time learning and tend to show more behavioral problems.

**Q: Can you describe an optimal sleep environment for a toddler?**

- Toddlers should go to sleep at night in a room that is quite dark. Target an 8 or 9 on a 10-point scale.
- The room temperature should be on the cool side. Anywhere from 68-72 degrees is considered optimal.
- Use a white noise machine for comfort as well as to screen out any loud or unexpected noises.
- Keep the crib devoid of toys.

**Q: What are the biggest mistakes parents make when it comes to their toddler's sleep?**

- Putting them to bed too late.
- Transitioning them from the crib too early.
- Relying on motion to get them to sleep (especially for naps).
- Dropping the nap too early.
- Inconsistency around routines and sleep.