

## Important Safety Tips

- If bed-sharing ensure that all safety measures have been adhered to. Guidelines can be found on [www.sidsireland.ie](http://www.sidsireland.ie)
- It is recommended that your baby sleep in your room until he is about 6 months old.
- Always put your baby to bed with their feet at the bottom of the cot and on their back.
- Always make sure your child does not sleep in a draught, near curtain cords or radiators.
- The room should be conducive to sleep.
- Teddy bears, pillows etc. should not be placed in the cot/crib of a young baby.

## Remember

- Babies can need reassurance that you are there for them during the night, always reassure your child you are there, pick your child up if needed, place your child back in their crib/cot/bed once your child has calmed down.
- No child will sleep through the night every night, there will always be issues such as illness or teething to disrupt sleep, you will need to comfort your child in any way you can in these circumstances, however when your child is better get your child back into their original routine, this will prevent long term negative sleep habits forming.

## Nightmares/Night-terrors

- **Nightmares** usually occur in the latter part of the night when your child is in a light sleep. Your child will wake up after having a dream that scared her. She will cry and look for you to comfort her. Your child may be afraid to return to sleep.
- **Night Terrors/Sleep Terrors** are most common in children between the ages of 2 and 4 although they can happen at any age. They happen generally in the early part of the night usually within 2/3 hours of going to sleep when the child is transitioning from a Non REM sleep (deep sleep) into a REM sleep (light sleep). Night Terrors are much more dramatic than a nightmare, a child can scream, run around, throw objects, become violent towards themselves and others around them. The child's eyes will be open and they will appear to be awake. A child may breath faster, their heart-rate can rise and they may also sweat. Night terrors can be distressing for parents, although they have no mental side effects on the child.



## Day & Night Sleep

- New born babies don't know they should be awake during the day and sleep at night, the following can help them to establish this;
- Wake your child after certain periods of time during the day, for a new born baby let your baby sleep for approximately 2 hours and then try and keep your baby awake for 1.5/2 hours, a newborn baby should nap approximately 5 hours in a 12 hour period.
- When trying to keep your baby awake, be noisy, playful, and keep the area your baby is in bright.
- At night time when your baby awakes remain very quiet, keep the room dark and keep conversation and interaction to a minimum.



## Baby Sleep Tips



BABY SLEEP  
ACADEMY

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## How Do Babies Sleep?

To understand how a child sleeps and how important sleep associations are you must first understand sleep cycles. Sleep cycles are pretty much the same for every child after about 3 or 4 months of age. When a child sleeps, he enters a light sleep (REM) for about 15/20 minutes. Then he will go into a deep sleep (non-REM), this sleep lasts usually about 3 hours, your child could awaken very briefly after the first 60/90 minutes. After this, which is normally between 11pm and 5am your child is constantly changing sleep cycles, his cycle could be between 15 and 60 minutes long depending on the child and their age (usually it is between 30/45 minutes) but the cycles will have a fairly regular pattern. Then at about 5am the cycles slow down where the child will spend a longer amount of time in each cycle, however when he is in a light sleep it will be a very light sleep therefore your child will be easily awoken.

Everyone, child/adult wakes briefly when changing from one cycle to the next, you might usually just turn in the bed, move an arm, pull the covers up etc., and then you return to sleep.

If a child has a negative sleep association, problems occur, a child needs everything to be the same when he awakes to be able to go back to sleep. It is similar for adults, as, if you went to bed with your partner and during the night you turned over and sensed he/she was not there you would wake up too. Or, if your pillow fell out of the bed you would wake up and look for it. It is exactly the same for a child, therefore it is very important that a child can settle themselves unaided back to sleep otherwise whatever the association is, it will be needed during the night.

## What Effects Sleep

### Positive Sleep Associations

Anything the child can do/find for themselves to enable them to get to sleep

- Bedtime Routine
- Cot/Crib
- Blanket/Teddy

### Useful Sleep Aids

- Night lights - as a dark room can be very scary to the older baby. Natural light can awake a child however a constant night light does not.

- White noise - i.e. background music is also very comforting, however it should be on all night and not just when the child is going to sleep as this can be upsetting if it is not on when the child wakes up. For an older child a dream catcher or magic spray which will give your child the reassurance to conquer any bad dreams etc. that they might have.

### Negative Sleep Associations Bedtime Routine

Anything the child needs assistance with to help them get to sleep

- Soother, Rocking, feeding, staying in room, etc.
- Continuously sleeping in buggy or car.
- Falling asleep elsewhere and then being moved to cot/crib
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- The hour before bedtime can affect how your child sleeps, if it is too stimulating then it will take your child a lot longer to fall off to sleep.

- House should be calm and you should speak to your child in gentle tones.

- Have some sort of bedtime routine, i.e. look at photos, read stories, sing songs or for the older child have a chat about the day.

- Use sleep cues when putting your child into the cot/crib.

- Always reassure your child that you will be back to check on them regularly through-out the night.

### Try not to...

- If introducing a soother, try not to let your baby fall asleep with it in his mouth.
- If your baby is falling asleep while you feed him, then stop feeding. If you are breastfeeding/bottle feeding retract or remove the bottle/breast as your baby's eyes start to droop. Your baby may wake up again, continue to feed until he gets sleepy again. Continue the cycle until your baby has finished his feed.
- Rock your baby to sleep, if you need to rock your baby stop when he gets sleepy.
- Allow your child to fall asleep in one place and then move your child to the cot/crib, your child will most likely wake later wondering where he/she is.
- Allow visitors to pick up your baby if your baby is asleep, your baby needs this sleep otherwise your baby will become overtired and find it very hard to settle.

### Overtiredness

- When a child gets overtired their body releases Cortisol which is a steroid hormone produced through the adrenal gland.
- The child will fight sleep and usually have a restless night's sleep if overtired.
- It can take a child much longer to fall off to sleep as his body is fighting and continues to fight sleep through-out the night.