PEDIATRIC EDITION - NEWBORN TO 3 YEARS

7 Tips for Restful Sleep

Chasing Dreams
SLEEP CONSULTING

The Importance of Healthy Sleep Habits and How to Create Them

Here at Chasing Dreams, we strongly believe that healthy sleep habits help to create happy, healthy and active children. Establishing those good sleep habits isn't just about bedtimes or length of naps (although we know those are important, too), it's about developing positive behaviors that your child will use for a lifetime. We know that sleep doesn't just restore the body but it also aids in brain development, so it's imperative that you lay the groundwork for restful sleep right from the start.

Throughout my career as a sleep professional, I've had countless people ask me what the "secret" is to getting a child to sleep through the night. Although I'd love to give you just one reason or one tip, it's often a combination of many life factors. We do, however, know of a few universal themes that impact children's sleep so we created this quick reference guide with those things in mind, so you can start working to build the foundation for better sleep. Let's get right to it and get sleeping!

Erin Lawyer

Owner of Chasing Dreams Sleep Consulting

#1 Sleep Tip

Avoid Overtiredness

One of the BIGGEST enemies of sleep, especially for babies and toddlers, is being overtired. Many parents are surprised to learn just how much sleep their child needs and how quickly they can become overtired. The chart below summarizes the recommended number of awake hours, in between naps (by age group).

AGE	AVERAGE AWAKE TIME
NEWBORNS (0-12 WEEKS)	45-60 MINUTES
3-5 MONTHS	1.5-2 HOURS
6-8 MONTHS	2-3 HOURS
9-12 MONTHS	3-4 HOURS
13 MONTHS to 2.5 YEARS	5-6 HOURS

BONUS TIP: If you make sure your child is put down for naps before they get overtired, you'll find that they fall asleep more easily at nap-time and they are more relaxed at bedtime too!

#2 Sleep Tip

Don't Be Afraid of the Dark

We humans (babies and toddlers included), sleep better in the dark so try making your child's room as dark as possible. I recommend using blackout blinds, double- sided curtains, taping cardboard over the windows, or whatever it takes to block out bright light.

In many cases, even the glow from a nightlight, a monitor or a digital alarm clock can be enough to disrupt your child's sleep cycle. Our lightest stages of sleep are between 4am & 6am, when artificial light can play an even bigger role in sleep disruption.

During the daytime, many children in daycare or with another caregiver won't always have total darkness. Don't worry, your little one can still establish good sleep habits. Just try to be mindful of establishing the foundations of sleep first, which will help them to sleep well in the daytime anywhere.

BONUS TIP: Try to keep your child's room as dark as possible during daytime naps. This can often make a big difference in how long your child will nap during the day. It could be the difference between them waking up after their first sleep cycle at 45 minutes or sleeping a full 1.5-2 hours.

#3 Sleep Tip

Be Predictable (and boring)

Children love predictable routines. A predictable bedtime routine (lasting no longer than 30-45 minutes) is a great way to let your child know that sleep is coming. While they may protest wanting to kick-off the routine, the boundaries you set actually provide a sense of calm and lessen the anxiety around bedtime because they know what's coming next.

A bedtime routine might look something like this:

- Last feed (10-15 minutes)
- Bath (10-15 min)
- Put on pajamas (5 min)
- Read a story or sing songs (5-10 min)

Make sure that your routine is the same every single time. Remember, you want bedtime to be as predictable as possible for your child. After your bedtime routine is complete, be boring.

Lots of children will try to drag out bedtime by playing games, throwing toys out of the crib, standing up, etc. Don't participate. If your child has thrown their blanket or favorite stuffed toy out of the bed, calmly return the item without saying a word. Be boring and the games won't last long!

#4

Sleep Tip

Feed After Naps, not to Sleep

For a lot of babies and toddlers, the single biggest reason they don't sleep well has to do with a feeding-sleep association. In other words, your child has linked the ideas of feeding and sleeping. They think that they need a bottle or they need to nurse BEFORE they can fall asleep. By feeding right after nap-time, instead of before, you can help your child break this feeding-sleep association.

Important Note: A full tummy is needed to make sure your child doesn't wake up hungry during the night. With that said, you should ensure a full feed at bedtime, just don't feed them to sleep.

#5

Sleep Tip

Same Place, Same Time

Remembering that our children love predictability, it's a good idea to have your child sleep in the same place, at the same time, every day. This means that nap-time should happen in the same place as nighttime sleep happens, rather than in car seats, strollers, your lap at the coffee shop, etc.

If children sleep in a crib at daycare or with a caregiver, that's ok, it's consistent and similar to where they usually sleep at night. For many parents, simply changing WHERE their child naps during the day causes a big improvement in the length and quality of nighttime sleep.

With anything, there is balance. I understand that you can't be perfect every day, so give yourself the 80/20 rule, because that predictability will be a trigger to their body that it is time to rest.

BONUS TIP: When you are putting your child to sleep for the night, it is a good idea to make sure that they fall asleep where you want them to stay asleep. In other words, if your child falls asleep in your arms on the couch and then wakes up during the night in a completely different place (like their crib), chances are they'll be surprised and start crying to let you know about it!

#2 Sleep Tip

Try the 1, 2, 3 System

When your child wakes up during the night or during a nap and starts crying or fussing, try to wait a specific length of time before going in to check on them. The first day you try this, I recommend waiting exactly one minute before going in to check on your child. On the second day, wait two minutes. Three minutes on the third day, and so on.

Why? Children wake up briefly at the end of each 45-60 minute sleep cycle. Most adults wake up too but it's so brief that we don't even remember it in the morning. But children who have not learned to fall asleep independently need a little longer to practice the skill of transitioning.

BONUS TIP: This "1,2,3" System gives your child the opportunity to get themselves back to sleep without your help. And once your child has learned this skill, you will begin to see them transition to better & longer daytime and overnight stretches.

#7 Sleep Tip

Take 10

Before you put your child to bed (for naps or at night-time), make sure the 10-minute period before they are put to bed is very calm and relaxing. No throwing your toddler in the air or watching TV or tickle fights in the five minutes immediately before bed. Blue-light from the TV can be very disrupting to a child, so pay special attention to that.

I totally encourage playtime and any other kinds of rowdy fun you can think of with your children. These kinds of activities are fun for the whole family, just NOT in the ten minutes before bed. Save the playtime for right after nap when your little one is rested and refreshed!

Do You Need Additional Support?

As I mentioned earlier, this is a quick reference guide to help you begin to understand sleep in your child. This can be used to start building a solid foundation for sleep but it may not solve all of your sleep problems. I always encourage parents to first work with their pediatrician to understand what is going on and determine what may work best for your family. As a pediatric sleep professional, I deal with all things sleep and would love to be another resource for you.

I have always been passionate about making sleep a priority in my family's life, so if you're struggling with your child's sleep and need help, I encourage you to set up a free evaluation and learn more about Chasing Dreams approach.

We work intimately with families to build a customized program that allows you as parents, to feel confident in the gentle changes we will make to transform your children into the best sleepers on your block. We provide the support, knowledge, guidance and know-how to get it done in just a few short days. Yes, really! Reach out today to learn more about our approach and how we can give you the most wonderful gift in the world... the gift of sleep!

Meet Erin, Owner of Chasing Dreams

"I am different from other sleep professionals, not just in how we structure the programs and communicate with clients, but how we care and provide for the families through ongoing support, education, research and success. Sleep evolves and we evolve with you to keep everyone rested in your home."

-Erin Lawyer

wondering what's possible?

LET'S CONNECT ON A FREE, 20-MINUTE EVALUATION CALL

No obligation at all. (I promise.)

We talk about:

- Where you are right now
- What's working, what isn't
- What you'd like to see change
- How we can help your family get back to sleeping well.

I love connecting with you in person learning more about your story.

Schedule a Free Evaluation Call

I believe in you and what's possible for your family.

Erin Lawyer