

TINY BITS (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER) FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
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The Importance of Sleep in Young Children

Sleep is an essential building block for your child's mental and physical health. But according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a quarter of children under the age of 5 don't get adequate sleep.

Do any of these sound familiar to you?

- Eight-week-old Tabitha falls asleep quickly as her mom rocks and sings to her. But the second her mom puts her down, Tabitha starts to cry until her mother picks her up again.
- Brian, 16 months, still wakes up 2–3 times a night and can't go back to sleep unless his mom or dad pats his back for up to 30 minutes.
- Natasha, 33 months, refuses to go to sleep without a bedtime routine that seems to get longer each night. Even after "lights out," she calls for her dad or grandmother many times for drinks of water and trips to the bathroom.

What Happens When Children Don't Get Enough Sleep?

Poor sleep in early childhood has been linked to Hay fever and problems with the immune system, as well as anxiety and depression and may carry future cardiovascular risks in the form of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

How much sleep children need varies by age. While every child is different, experts recommend:

- infants (0–3 months): 14–17 hours, including naps
- infants (4–12 months): 12–16 hours, including naps
- toddlers (1–3 years): 11–13 or 14 hours, including naps

Sleep tips for babies: Because they have yet to develop a daily rhythm, newborn babies rarely sleep through the night, and that's ok. If they don't fall back asleep naturally, try soothing them by talking or with touch, without picking them up. If they continue to cry, they may be hungry or need their diaper changed. Quickly and quietly fix the problem, using only a nightlight if possible, and calmly leave the room.

Sleep tips for toddlers: Toddler sleep problems may be compounded by separation anxiety and a fear of missing out, which translates to stalling techniques and stubbornness at bedtime. You can reduce these challenges by giving them control over min choices like which pajamas to wear or which book to read. Try to be patient, firm, yet loving because power struggles are likely to cause a stronger response from them.

Excerpted: [Sleep Challenges: Why It Happens, What to Do | ZERO TO THREE](#)
Excerpted: [Children and Sleep | Sleep Foundation](#)

