

Sleep

Newborn-6 months: Newborns sleep a lot-usually 16-17 hours a day. They alternate between periods of deep sleep and lighter sleep more often than adults. Sleeping for 6-8 hours at a time can occur anywhere from a few months to a couple of years . To make it easier to sleep at night ,provide a quiet dark bedroom. Most experts urge parents not to make middle of the night feedings fun. Don't sing, rock or cuddle. Don't even change diapers unless absolutely necessary.

Older babies- 6-12 months: These babies sleep 8-12 hours a night and have a couple of 1-3 hour naps during the day. Their sleep cycles have matured and most babies are now capable of sleeping through the night. Elmer R. Grossman, M.D. in his book, *Everyday Pediatrics for Parents* recommends the following procedure to get your baby to sleep through the night. He says the time to teach your baby to sleep through is when both parent are in complete agreement about its necessity. Both parents need to have suffered greatly in order to face a few nights of misery. To encourage your baby to sleep through the night you need to let her know that waking will be totally unrewarding and he suggests that when your baby does awaken let her know that she has not been "abandoned to the wolves," that her parents though mean, are still there. Have one parent go to her and quickly tell her to go back to sleep. The first night it is possible that these periods of crying punctuated by parental appearance will persist for a very long time, but by the third night your baby should be nearly quiet. Finally, Grossman promises all babies subjected to this program awaken quite happy and are just as pleased as ever to see mom and dad.

Toddlers--ages 1-3: Thankfully toddlers still need naps giving parents some spare time to take a shower, clean up or make a phone call. But, unhappily the transition from 2 to 1 nap a day can test parental patience. Tears, tantrums and whining may continue for a while until the new schedule is set. Another setback in an established bedtime routine may occur when a baby move from a crib to a bed. Without the bars to restrain her your baby may pop out of bed many , many times a night. If returning her to room several times doesn't work, Dr. Grossman recommends a gate at the bedroom door. It allows the child to know that she has not been abandoned and that her complaints can still be heard.

Preschoolers-ages 3-5: Most preschool children still nap and most need 11-12 hours of sleep a night. This is the age when delaying tactics become an art form. If your child is protesting going to bed could it be that he is actually not tired. Let him stay up a little later and check his behavior the next day. Is he cranky and short tempered or cheerful and easy going.

Working parents, especially need to be certain about the messages they give their children about bedtime. Parents who have been away from their children all day are torn by conflicting needs.They want quiet time, spouse time, time to do chores, and time to be with the kids. You haven't seen your children all day, you feel guilty about being firm at bedtime. Can they sense your ambivalence? But being firm and setting limits is part of the package of parenting, being a responsible parent requires you to set limits. You'll feel more rested if you do.

For more information about sleep call the Maine Parent Federation Library at 623-2144 or 1-800-870-7746.