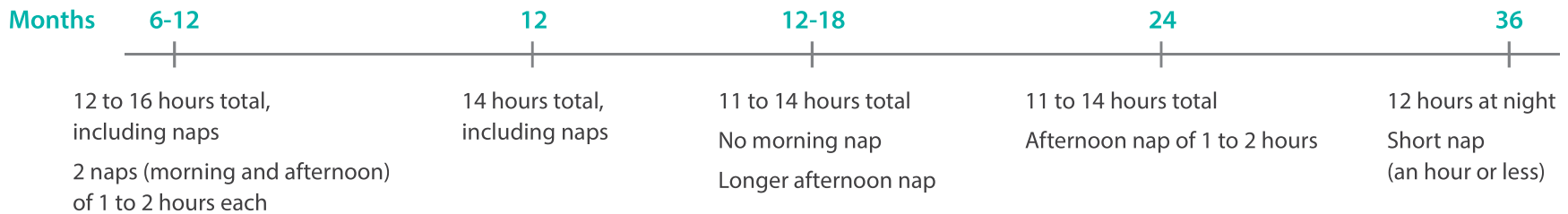


Sleep and Your Toddler

Healthy sleep habits are as important as healthy food when it comes to your child's development.

Typical Sleep Patterns for Babies and Toddlers



DID YOU KNOW?

Many children continue to have a morning nap (as well as an afternoon nap) until 18 months or older.



TRY THIS

If your toddler has trouble going to sleep or isn't sleeping well, keep a sleep diary. Over a couple of weeks, write down when they sleep and for how long. Note any patterns, then experiment with changes in nap times and routines. Make any changes gradually – just 5 to 10 minutes every second day.



HOW TO

Develop good sleep habits

Babies and toddlers thrive on routine – and routines around sleep are especially important.

- ✓ Follow routines in the daytime, including regular meal and snack times.
- ✓ Keep a regular night-time and nap-time sleep schedule, even on weekends.
- ✓ Ensure your child gets lots of physical activity during the day, but not right before bed.
- ✓ Set a before-bed routine including a bath, a book and a quiet cuddle of 20 minutes or less.
- ✓ Keep the sleep area quiet.
- ✗ Don't give your toddler food or drinks with caffeine, like chocolate or pop.
- ✗ Be careful about too much screen time during the day (see [Screen Time](#)), and turn off screens well before bedtime.

Falling Asleep on Their Own

Your child may have gotten used to being breastfed or chestfed or rocked to sleep when they were a baby. But by learning to fall asleep on their own, they'll be able to settle themselves when they partially wake during the night.

Try:

- ✓ feeding them earlier in the bedtime routine (about 15 minutes before putting them into bed) so they don't associate feeding with sleep
- ✓ setting a bedtime routine that includes singing a song or reading a story
- ✓ putting them into bed awake, patting them gently until they settle, then saying goodnight and leaving
- ✓ sitting in a chair close by the bed with your hand on them if they have a hard time settling, and moving the chair further away each night
- ✓ using a nightlight in the corner or having a light on just outside their room if they don't like the dark



FAMILY STORY

We started reading to our daughter right before bed when she was a baby. It helped her slow down and understand it was time to sleep. When she was a toddler, she always wanted a story, so it got her into bed. Now, at 12, she likes to read herself. But she still loves this close, quiet time with one of us.

Waking in the Night

Your child may wake up during the night if they're too hot or cold, if they're wet, hungry, teething or sick – or for no reason at all. You can help them learn to go back to sleep on their own by:

- keeping the lights off when you feed or change them during the night
- not making nighttime a time for chatting or playing
- gradually shortening any nighttime feedings so they don't fully wake up

If they cry for no particular reason, you can help them learn to settle themselves by:

1. going to them, but not picking them up
2. calmly tucking them back into bed and telling them it's time to sleep
3. leaving the room
4. repeating as needed until they fall asleep

You may choose to wait a short time – 2 or 3 minutes – after they start crying before going to them. If so, over several days you can slowly increase the amount of time you let them cry before going in. But always check on them right away if they sound very upset and may be sick or injured.



DID YOU KNOW?

If your child falls asleep somewhere other than their own bed, they're more likely to wake during the night.



TRY THIS

If you have concerns, talk with your health care provider or a public health nurse. They can screen for any issues that may make it difficult for your toddler to sleep well.



BRAIN BUILDER

Give your toddler some choices at bedtime, like which story to read or which pajamas to wear.



DANGER

If your toddler is under 12 months old, always put them to sleep on their back to lower the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Safer Cribs

Ensure:

- the crib is approved by Health Canada (ask a health care provider if you're not sure)
- the mattress is in the lowest position if your toddler is able to sit up
- there are no items they could climb on to fall out of the crib
- there are no mobiles or other hanging objects that could strangle them

See *Baby's Best Chance* for more information on safer sleep for your 6-month-old.

Safer Beds

If your toddler is trying to climb out of the crib – or once they're almost 3 feet tall – it's time to move them to a bed. Ensure your toddler's bed:

- has a simple design
- has no spaces between the mattress and the headboard or walls
- has its headboard (not the side of the bed) against the wall
- is low to the floor
- has a carpet or quilt on the floor in case they fall out of bed
- has safety rails on all sides
- is the lower bunk if using a bunk bed set
- isn't by a window, if possible, and that all windows in the room have safety locks



DANGER

Portable bed rails can trap a child. Don't use them if your child is under 2.



DID YOU KNOW?

If you have more than one baby, it's safest to have them in their own sleep spaces. If they share the same crib, put them head to head, not side by side.

Bedsharing

What is bedsharing?

Sleeping in the same bed with your child.

When your child is between 6 months and a year old, the safest place for them to sleep is in their own Health Canada-approved crib. But many families prefer to bedshare for cultural or personal reasons. And some find that they end up bedsharing, even if they hadn't planned to.

Talk with your health care provider about how to balance your family's wishes with the risks of bedsharing. And if you do choose to share a bed, do so as safely as possible. Ensure:

- Your baby is far away from pillows, blankets and duvets.
- Your baby is on their back.
- They aren't swaddled.
- The mattress is on the floor to reduce the risk of a fall.
- The mattress is firm. (No waterbeds, pillowtops, air mattresses or feather beds.)
- The child is on the outside of the bed, not between adults.
- There's space around the bed so the child can't get trapped between the mattress and the wall or a side table.
- The adults in the bed both know that the child is in the bed and are comfortable with it.
- Any long hair is tied back so it can't get wrapped around your child's neck.
- No older children or pets are in the bed.



DANGER

Never share a bed if:

- your baby was born prematurely or weighed less than 2½ kg (5½ lb) at birth, or
- you or your partner(s):
 - smoke, or if you smoked while pregnant
 - have taken any substances that might make you sleep more heavily, like alcohol, medicine, cannabis or other drugs

Have another adult available to look after your child if you're drinking alcohol or using any substances.

Sleep-Related Infant Death

Sleep-related infant death can happen by accident (usually when a child is smothered or suffocated) or by **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** (SIDS or "crib death") – the unexplained death of a healthy child while sleeping. Lessen the risks by:

- putting your baby down to sleep on their back on a firm surface in their own safe sleep space
- making your home smoke-free
- keeping your child warm, but not hot
- breastfeeding or chestfeeding
- keeping pillows, toys, heavy blankets and pets out of your child's bed
- carefully considering the risks of bedsharing