

# Sleeping & bedwetting

## Patience, praise and peace

There are many different reasons why babies do not sleep. It is normal for a baby at six weeks old not to sleep through the night. Feel confident in yourself to know whether your child is really distressed or just restless. Trust your instincts.

Try to establish a regular sleep routine early on by putting them to bed at a regular time (day and night). Place your newborn baby on their back to sleep, in a cot in your bedroom for the first six months. Prepare a warm, comfortable place for them to relax in. Try to avoid always rocking your baby or 'feeding them' to sleep as this can become a habit. Adult beds are not designed for babies and toddlers and do not conform to safety standards. Only breastfeeding babies should ever be fed in bed and should be positioned on the outside of the bed and returned to the cot after the feed.

You can help your baby to sleep safe and sound by keeping the temperature in their room between 16-20°C. A basic room thermometer will help you to keep an eye on the temperature.

Reading to your child at bedtime helps them to unwind, and gives you some special time together. If your child is scared of the dark, try keeping a night light on.

### Tips for sleep problems

#### If your child won't go to bed

- Decide what time you want your child to go to bed.
- Start a 20-minute 'winding down' bedtime routine. Bring this forward by 5-10 minutes a week (or even by 15 minutes if your child is in the habit of going to bed very late), until you get to the bedtime you want.
- Set a limit on how much time you spend with your child when you put them to bed. For example, read only one story, then tuck them in and say goodnight.
- Give them their favourite toy, or comforter before settling into bed.
- Leave a beaker of water within reach and a dim light on if necessary.
- If they get up, keep taking them back to bed again with as little fuss as possible.
- Try to be consistent.

You may have to repeat this routine.

**Bed-sharing with your baby is never completely safe. It is particularly dangerous for your baby to sleep in your bed if you (or your partner):**

- Are a smoker (even if you never smoke in bed or at home).
- Have been drinking alcohol or taken any drugs.
- Have taken any medication that makes you drowsy.
- If your baby was premature (born before 37 weeks).
- If your baby was low birth weight (less than 2.5kg).
- If you or your partner are overweight.

It is very dangerous to fall asleep together on a sofa, armchair or settee and it is also risky to allow a baby to sleep alone in an adult bed.

## **A safe sleeping environment**

1. Place your baby in the 'feet to foot' position i.e. baby's at the of the cot.
2. Newborn babies should sleep in a cot in parent's bedroom or room where you are during the day.
3. Make sure baby is not too hot nor too cold.
4. Put baby to sleep on their back to reduce the risk of cot death.
5. Keep baby's head uncovered.
6. Do not smoke and keep the house smokefree.
7. No pillow, stuffed animals, toys or bumper pad.
8. No heavy or loose blankets.
9. If a blanket is used, it must be tucked in and only as high as the baby's chest.
10. Crib sheets must fit tightly over mattress.
11. Use a clean, firm, well-fitting mattress. Mattresses should carry the BSI number BS-1877-10:1997.
12. These apply to day time and night time sleeps.

1. My toddler gets up again and again during the night.
2. Do not engage with them, just put them back into bed.
3. You may need to repeat this over a period of time.

## **Bedwetting (Enuresis)**

Bedwetting can be worrying and frustrating, but it's common for young children to accidentally wet the bed during the night. It gets less common as a child gets older, with 1 in 12 children wetting the bed at least twice a week at four and a half years old. Bedwetting is slightly more common in boys than girls and usually resolves itself.

Bedwetting may be associated with constipation, especially in children who don't wet themselves every night. Occasionally, bedwetting can be triggered by emotional distress, such as being bullied or moving to a new school. In rare cases, bedwetting may be the symptom of an underlying health condition, such as type 1 diabetes.

Try not to lose your patience or punish your child as they are not doing this on purpose. Children learn at their own pace and praise and support will help.

## **When to see your school nurse or GP**

Bedwetting is rarely considered a problem in under 5s and medical treatments aren't usually recommended. If your child frequently wets the bed and finds it upsetting, speak to your GP for advice. For more self-help information go to [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk).

### **Bedwetting could be caused by your child:**

- Producing more urine than their bladder can cope with.
- Having an overactive bladder, which means that it can only hold a small amount of urine.
- Being a very deep sleeper so they don't react to the signals telling their brain their bladder is full.

### **Smokefree**

Call 0800 032 0102 or visit [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk)

Source: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)