
Toddler Sleep: 1- to 2-Year-Olds

Toddlers are more and more aware of their surroundings, so distractions might disrupt them at bedtime. Their growing imaginations can start to interrupt sleep too.

Now more than ever, a **simple and consistent bedtime routine** is a parent's best bet for getting a sleepy toddler snugly into bed.

How Much Sleep Do Toddlers Need?

Between the ages of 1 and 2, most kids need about **11-14 hours** of sleep a day, including one or two daytime naps.

At around 18 months, or sometimes sooner, most toddlers condense their two naps into one afternoon nap. A toddler who fights the morning nap is probably ready for just an afternoon nap.

Sleep Safety

Where Should My Toddler Sleep?

Your 1- to 2-year-old should still sleep in a safe, secure crib.

What's OK to Put in the Crib?

Before a child's first birthday, blankets are not recommended because of the possible risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). But at this age, it's OK to put a light blanket in your child's crib. Also, security items like "loovies" (a small soft blanket or stuffed animal) are OK and can provide a lot of comfort. But don't put any extra-large soft toys or stuffed animals in the crib.

Watch out for items with ties or strings that could wind up around your toddler's neck. Be on constant lookout for nearby objects your child might be able to reach from a standing position in the crib: curtains, window blind pulls, pictures, or wall hangings are all possibilities.

How Can I Prevent Climbing Out of the Crib?

Your curious toddler may be looking for ways to climb over the crib railing to "break out" of the crib. Don't leave a lot of toys that your child could pile up and climb onto. And remember: **No bumper pads** — a child might use those as a step at this age.

If you have an active climber who is getting out of the crib, make sure that the crib mattress is on the lowest possible setting. If it is, and your toddler is still trying to scale the crib, consider moving your child into a toddler bed or "big kid" bed with a side rail. It will be hard at first to keep your toddler in it, but at least you'll know your child won't be hurt climbing out of a crib. For added safety, install a gate in the doorway of the room so that your child can't wander around the house. Be sure your child's room is childproofed.

Why Is My Toddler Waking at Night?

Your toddler may begin waking up at night for a number of reasons, including:

- **Pain or worry.** Sometimes it's because of discomfort, such as teething pain or illness. Sometimes it's due to mild separation anxiety: "Where's Mommy? Where's Daddy?"
- **Dreams and nightmares.** Dreams and nightmares can begin to affect toddlers, who have a hard time telling these from reality. Be mindful of books your toddler sees just before bedtime, and keep the content mild. If your child doesn't have a comfort item like a lovie or blanket, consider getting one to help provide reassurance.
- **Screens.** Time spent with screens (like a TV or tablet) can disrupt a child's sleep. That's one reason why health experts recommend limiting screen time and keeping toddlers away from screen devices in the hour before bedtime. Devices should also not be in your child's bedroom.
- **Cold temperatures.** Toddlers often push off the covers at night, so in the colder months you might want to dress your child in heavier pajamas for warmth.
- **Noise.** Is there too much noise coming from another room? Toddlers will learn to sleep with some noise, but a loud TV or too much conversation close by can be disrupting. Check out your child's room from a noise perspective. Make it someplace you would sleep soundly and chances are you'll make it more comfortable for your toddler.

How Can I Help My Toddler Sleep?

- **Follow a routine.** By now you've probably found the right combination — like a warm bath and a bedtime story — to help your child relax. Stay with it and don't let it get too long. The backrub that seems like a treat now may not be so fun when it's demanded night after night for longer and longer periods. Decide how many drinks of water you'll allow and how many times you'll get the toy that's thrown out of the crib in defiance of bedtime.
- **Get used to setting the rules and sticking to them.** This not only helps your child get more sleep now, but also helps you later if other, more serious discipline problems arise.
- **Keep nighttime checks short.** If your toddler wakes in the middle of the night, you'll still want to quietly and quickly provide reassurance that everything is OK and you are close by. But too much interaction can backfire, so keep your nighttime "visits" brief and boring for your toddler.
- **Make mornings easier.** If you have an early riser, help keep sunlight from waking your toddler by keeping curtains or blinds closed. Also try putting a few safe toys in the crib — they may keep your child busy in the morning.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Talk with your doctor about any sleep problems that seem severe to you, such as recurring nightmares.

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