



[How much sleep does my child need?](#)

The amount of sleep a child requires varies with age. To ensure your child receives adequate rest, it is crucial to strive for the recommended maximum sleep duration for each age group. While some children may not exhibit clear signs of fatigue, they still often need the maximum sleep for optimal positive effects. We find that until age 7, children do best with 11-12 hours of nighttime sleep. When building your child's sleep schedule, prioritize night sleep timing.

AGE	RECOMMENDED HOURS	NAP	WAKE WINDOW	IDEAL BEDTIME
Toddler 18-24 Months	11-14 hours per 24 hours	1.5-2 hours per day	4-5 hours	7-8pm depending on nap timing
Toddler 2-3 Years	10-13 hours per 24 hours	0-1.5 hours per day	wake-nap 6 hours nap-bed 5 hours	7-8pm depending on nap timing
Preschool 3-5 Years	10-13 hours per 24 hours	0-1.5 hours per day	wake-nap 6 hours nap-bed 5 hours	7-730pm
School Age 6-12 Years	9-12 hours per night	—	—	7-8pm
Adult	7+ per night	—	—	—

Wake Windows

A wake window is the time a child should be awake between sleeping. We use these windows to ensure children are awake long enough to be tired when it is time to sleep next but not too overtired that their body starts to produce cortisol.

Nap

We recommend that children under the age of 3 take a nap, and those under the age of 2 specifically require a nap. For children under 2.5 years old, follow the Week to Sleep method for nap time. If your child is over 2.5, use your discretion in deciding whether to include a nap. If your child stops napping, adjust bedtime accordingly. The earlier the nap is dropped, the earlier bedtime should be. For children under 3 who do not nap, it is recommended to have "lights out" by 7 pm. It is not uncommon that a child who attends daycare or school might nap at school and not at home, adjust bedtime to be earlier on non-nap days.

Building the schedule

As you establish your child's sleep schedule, begin with the "non-moveable" elements. For instance, if your child's school provides a nap from 1-2:30 pm, start building the schedule from that point. Or, if you need to wake your child at 6 am for a timely departure for work, use that as a fixed point. Then, refer to the chart above to ensure your child gets appropriate sleep based on age.

For example, if a 2-year-old attends daycare with a nap scheduled from 1-3 pm and sleeps the entire duration, bedtime would be set 5 hours from the nap wake time, indicating lights out at 8 pm. To meet the recommended night sleep duration of at least 11 hours, your child's morning wake-up time should be 7 am. However, if your child must wake up at 6 am for school, prioritize night sleep over a nap. Consider waking your child at 2:30 pm for 1-2 weeks at daycare to enable a bedtime of 7:30 pm. In this adjusted schedule, lights out would be at 7:30 pm, wake-up at 6 am, and nap from 1-2:30 pm- over the 1-2 weeks of waking your child from nap early, their body will adjust to the new schedule then they will no longer need the nudge to wake-up from nap.



Example Bedtime Schedule

5:30 pm Dramatic Books, playtime, screentime

Read books, have active play, or offer screen time (limit to 1 hour)

5:45 pm Dinner

It is best to enjoy dinner as a family sitting at the table as little ones learn to try new things by example. Refrain from using screens at the table, as it is tough for your child to focus on their hunger and fullness cues while interacting with a screen. If your child typically nurses or gets a bottle during the bedtime routine, offer it at the end of dinner on the couch- they might take less than they typically would, and that is ok!

6:20 pm Bath

Start with fun and engaging energy; towards the end of the bath, start talking less, dim the lights, and create a relaxing spa-like environment- this is crucial for sleep success, so do not skip the relaxation time in the bath.

15-30 minutes

6:50 pm Book Time: two short or one long

Read two short or one long bedtime style book in a hushed and very slow voice. This should be relaxing and very routine. No extra books here! Read in a chair together vs. reading on a bed.

No longer than 10 minutes!

7:00 pm Lights Out

Help your child to bed, give kisses, and say how much they are loved, then kneel next to the bed and pat their back in complete silence for 2-3 minutes, no longer - then leave the room without saying anything else. No extra time here. This needs to be very routine- the same every night so your child knows what to expect.

No longer than 5 minutes!



Example Bedtime Schedule

5:30 pm Dramatic Books, playtime, screentime

Read books, have active play, or offer screen time (limit to 1 hour)

6:15 pm Dinner

It is best to enjoy dinner as a family sitting at the table as little ones learn to try new things by example. Refrain from using screens at the table, as it is tough for your child to focus on their hunger and fullness cues while interacting with a screen. If your child typically nurses or gets a bottle during the bedtime routine, offer it at the end of dinner on the couch- they might take less than they typically would, and that is ok!

6:50 pm Bath

Start with fun and engaging energy; towards the end of the bath, start talking less, dim the lights, and create a relaxing spa-like environment- this is crucial for sleep success, so do not skip the relaxation time in the bath.

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