

Sleeping

“Moving into and out of sleep are times when most humans are very vulnerable. If there is ever a time to be relaxed and gentle with children and to treat them as individuals, it is while helping them to move into and out of sleep.”

~ Prime Times: A Handbook for Excellence in Infant and Toddler Programs

Stages 1 through 3 (Birth to around 12 months)

What you can expect from me:

- I will sleep between 8 and 16 hours a day. I can fall asleep easily.
- Around 6 months, I may be able to sleep through the night.
- I will show you that I need sleep by yawning, rubbing my eyes, crying, and/or fussing.
- I will begin to understand and expect routines. I will know it's time to sleep when we read a book quietly then get my blanket and rock for a little while, or when I'm put in my bed.
- My sleep needs are unique to me. I may need to be swaddled tightly or loosely, rocked or placed in my crib, given a quiet space or sung to, or I may need to babble or talk to myself. I may also need to cry to let off some steam before sleep.



My caregivers support me during naptimes by:

- allowing me to sleep when I need to, and following my natural sleep pattern.
- helping me learn ways to calm myself so I can sleep on my own. Try swaddling, singing, or rocking with me before you put me down to sleep.
- putting me down to sleep when I'm still awake.
- explaining to me what you are helping me to do and what is coming next.
- watching for the ways I like to fall asleep. It can take a while to recognize this in some children.



Stages 4 and 5 (12 to around 36 months)

What you can expect from me:

- I will sleep between 12 and 14 hours a day and take one or two naps a day.
- I will let you know when I need to sleep with more obvious signs. I may use words to tell you, or seek out items that I always sleep with.
- With consistent routines and responses, I may begin to participate in my sleep routines by going to my mat or crib and arranging my comfort items when it's time to sleep.

- I may need help finding the best way to fall asleep.
- My sleep routine (when I need sleep and how I fall asleep) will be more consistent if you help me get to sleep when I'm tired.

My caregivers support me during naptimes by:

- creating a sleep routine. Try giving me a bath, reading books, and singing songs before turning the lights off.
- keeping my sleep routines consistent at home and in child care.
- providing a nap area in the child care center that is quiet and dark but still visible to classroom staff. Provide a nap space (crib or mat) for each child.
- encouraging families to bring comfort items from home, like blankets or stuffed toys, to snuggle with before going to sleep.



Preparing for Sleep

As Ben begins to rub his eyes and fuss (his obvious cues of sleepiness), his primary caregiver begins their routine of preparing for sleep. She brings out his blanket and pacifier. She swaddles Ben, gives him his pacifier, and holds him close for a few moments before laying him in his crib.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends placing healthy infants on their backs to sleep. They suggest these measures to help reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):

- Place babies on a firm mattress to sleep--never on a pillow, waterbed, sheepskin, couch, chair, or other soft surface. To prevent re-breathing, do not put blankets, comforters, stuffed toys, or pillows near the baby.
- Make sure babies do not get too warm while sleeping. Keep the room at a temperature that feels comfortable for an adult in a short-sleeved shirt. Some researchers suggest that a baby who gets too warm could go into a deeper sleep, making it more difficult for them to awaken.

For more on SIDS prevention and creating safe sleep practices and routines, see “A Child Care Provider’s Guide to Safe Sleep” at <http://www.healthychildcare.org/pdf/SIDSchildcaresafesleep.pdf>

FREE Reducing the Risk of SIDS in Child Care Online Module at: <http://www.healthychildcare.org/sids.html#SIDSmodule>. **Note:** to participate for free, you must use this promo code: **SIDSCCP**.

To learn more about sleeping, view the Resources and References found at the end of these materials.