



BEATING THE BEDTIME BLUES

Both a healthy quality and quantity of sleep are important for children's optimal development. A lack of adequate sleep for children has been linked to serious health problems such as anxiety and depression, obesity, diabetes, immunity problems, and ADHD. If getting your little ones to sleep seems to be a constant struggle, try the strategies below to help them get a better night's sleep.

SLEEP TIPS

- Set a **regular bedtime** for the entire family and make sure everyone sticks to it.
- Establish a **calming bedtime routine** to help your child wind down. For example, a warm bath, followed by pajamas and a bedtime story or lullaby.
- **Let your child choose a "lovey"** —a doll, blanket, stuffed animal, or other soft object to act as a bedtime companion. (**NOTE:** To reduce the risk of SIDS and suffocation, these items should never be placed in an infant's crib.)
- **Avoid screen media** (television, computer, video games) before bedtime and **do not put a television or computer in your child's room.**
- **Limit caffeine**, especially in the afternoon and evening. Do not give any caffeine at least 6 hours before bedtime.
- **Create a calm atmosphere in your home** during the evening —keep it quiet, dark, and slightly cool.

CALL THE DOCTOR IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- **Extreme, persistent fussiness** in your infant.
- **Breathing problems.**
- **Snoring**, especially if it is loud.
- **Unusual awakenings** during the night.
- **Constant difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep**, especially if the child is sleepy during the day or has behavioral problems.
- **Symptoms of RLS** (Restless Legs Syndrome). RLS causes an uncomfortable sensation in the legs, especially when sitting or lying down, and an irresistible urge to move the affected limb.
- **Signs of sleep apnea**, a treatable breathing problem. Signs may include frequent snoring, problems breathing at night, sleepiness during the day, difficulty paying attention, and behavior problems.

Sources:

- "A Lullaby for Good Health," December 28, 2011, <<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/A-Lullaby-for-Good-Health.aspx>>, accessed on February 16, 2012.
- "Restless Legs Syndrome Fact Sheet," November 25, 2011, <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/restless_legs/detail_restless_legs.htm>, accessed on February 16, 2012.
- "Sleep Apnea Detection," November 8, 2011, <<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Sleep-Apnea-Detection.aspx>>, accessed on February 16, 2012

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