

# Your toddler's sleep at... 1-2 years

## Your sleeping toddler

**Sleep is not under our control and cannot be forced. Here's how it happens:**

On average your toddler will sleep anything from 11-14 hours in a 24 hour period. At 12 months your child may have 1-2 naps, totalling a time of 2 - 2.5 hours' napping. However, some children will sleep a lot less and may still nap during the day. At around 18 months your toddler's time spent napping may reduce, and most children stop napping between age 3-4 years, but every child is different.

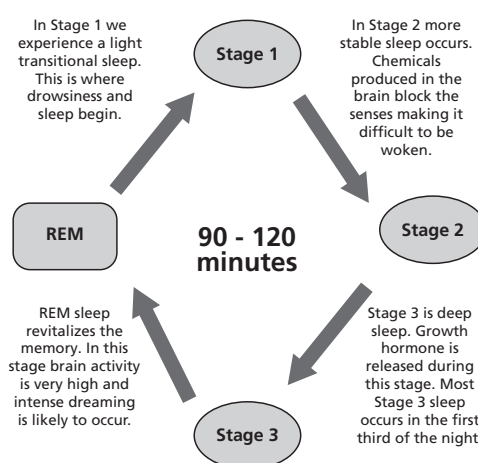
Your toddler's sleep cycle will increase in length to 60 minutes. Some children fall deeply asleep, whilst others sleep lightly, fidgeting and muttering for around 20 minutes before finally falling asleep. Children will wake briefly at the end of each sleep cycle and some children will call out when they wake. On some occasions your toddler will be able to settle themselves back to sleep without your support as they may not have actually woken up fully. On other occasions when crying is escalating they may need more support to settle back to sleep, which is very normal.

All children are different with their own personalities, some will sleep longer than others.

## What may affect sleep?

- **Artificial lighting.** Electric lighting can stimulate your toddler's brain, which reduces the effects of melatonin, making it more difficult for your toddler to fall asleep.
- **Stimulation.** The excitement of learning new skills such as learning to walk and talk can affect your toddler's sleep pattern.

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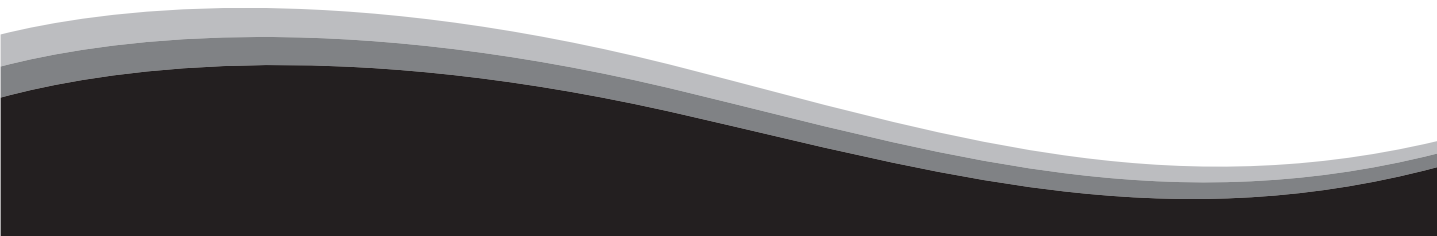


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- **Attachment.** Your toddler continues to have strong emotional attachments to you and they may get upset when they wake at night and you're not there. This is a normal and still part of their development.
  - **Feeding.** Some toddlers may still wake for feeds in the night, which is normal.
  - **Minor ailments.** Coughs, colds and teething can affect sleep.
  - **Transition.** Going from their cot to their first big bed, when they have outgrown their cots or are climbing out of it and is therefore unsafe.
  - **Change in routine.** Parents going back to work or your child starting nursery will impact how they sleep. You may find that your child wants to reconnect and be close with you at night-time. This is normal and by being responsive you are supporting their emotional needs. You cannot spoil your toddler with love and cuddles. We know from studies that children who receive consistent responsive parenting will grow up to be more confident and well-adjusted children.

## Your toddler's development

- Between the ages of 1 and 2 years your toddler will learn how to walk, run, kick and throw balls.
- They will learn how to use their new skills to build towers, start making marks on paper and explore messy play.
- They will start to say single words and communicate their needs through pointing at objects and making noises.
- They will become more independent and want to do things for themselves. It is not unusual for toddlers to challenge previously established routines and resist bedtimes.

## Ideas to support you and your toddler

- **Consistency.** A consistent day and night-time routine could help your toddler tune into their natural body clock. Getting up at the same time each day is recommended. If your toddler is still asleep treat it like a daytime nap - open the curtains, let some fresh air in if the weather is appropriate and carry on with your normal day.
  - **Stimulation.** During the daytime your toddler will benefit from lots of stimulation and exposure to sunlight, so take them out, do lots of interesting things that you can both enjoy eg a walk in the park, or activities at your local library and children's centre.
  - **Always end the day with praise and happy thoughts.** Have quiet time an hour before your bedtime routine starts. Activities can include reading together, drawing and puzzles. Avoid screen time such as tablets, smart phones and TV as the light from the screen interferes with the sleep hormone melatonin production.
  - **Routine.** Your toddler will respond well to a consistent bedtime routine, such as having a bath, dimming the lights, darkening the room and reducing overhead lighting. This is a good opportunity to read stories together. You may also want to consider black out curtains or thicker curtains in your toddler's room during the summer months.
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- **Bedtime.** Put your toddler to bed when they are tired - you don't want them to be too alert and active, and not overtired either, both of which can make falling asleep take longer.
  - **Reassurance.** If your child needs reassurance by your presence when settling to sleep at night, consider staying in their bedroom for a while. Make yourself comfortable and engage yourself in a relaxing activity such as reading or listening to music through - your presence alone may be all they need in order to settle. You may wish to gradually reduce the amount of time that you are in their room. If your child becomes distressed during this process, try staying in their bedroom longer and offering more comfort. It will take time, but this is okay and will resolve.

As a service we do not recommend any sleep modification/training techniques that involve leaving your baby/child to cry, such as controlled crying, pick up/put down. Recent evidence highlights the importance of responding to all of their needs responsively, in order to achieve optimum health and emotional wellbeing for your child.

**For further support or information please contact your health visiting team.**

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net)

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