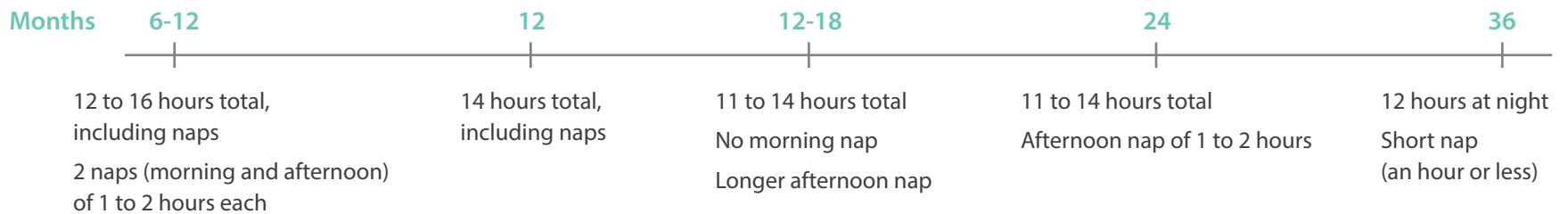


## Sleep and Your Toddler

Healthy sleep habits are as important as healthy food when it comes to your child's development.

### Typical Sleep Patterns for Toddlers



#### DID YOU KNOW

Many children continue to have a morning nap (as well as an afternoon nap) until 18 months or older.



#### TRY THIS

If your toddler has trouble going to sleep or isn't sleeping well, keep a sleep diary. Over a couple of weeks, write down when she sleeps and for how long. Note any patterns, then experiment with changes in nap times and routines. Make any changes gradually – just 5 to 10 minutes every second day.



#### HOW TO

##### Develop good sleep habits

Babies and toddlers thrive on routine – and routines around sleep are especially important.

- ✓ Follow routines in the daytime, including regular meal and snack times.
- ✓ Keep a regular night-time and nap-time sleep schedule, even on weekends.
- ✓ Ensure your child get lots of physical activity during the day, but not right before bed.
- ✓ Set a before-bed routine including a bath, a book and a quiet cuddle of 20 minutes or less.
- ✓ Keep the sleep area quiet.
- ✗ Don't give your toddler food or drinks with caffeine, like chocolate or pop.
- ✗ Be careful about too much screen time during the day (see [Screen Time](#)), and turn off screens well before bedtime.

## Falling Asleep on Her Own

Your child may have gotten used to being breastfed or rocked to sleep when she was a baby. But by learning to fall asleep on her own, she'll be able to settle herself when she partially wakes during the night.

Try:

- ✓ feeding her earlier in the bedtime routine (about 15 minutes before putting her into bed) so she doesn't associate feeding with sleep
- ✓ setting a bedtime routine that includes singing a song or reading a story
- ✓ putting her into bed awake, patting her gently until she settles, then saying goodnight and leaving
- ✓ sitting in a chair close by the bed with your hand on her if she has a hard time settling, and moving the chair further away each night
- ✓ using a nightlight in the corner or having a light on just outside her room if she doesn't like the dark



### FAMILY STORY

We started reading to our daughter right before bed when she was a baby. It helped her slow down and understand it was time to sleep. When she was a toddler, she always wanted a story, so it got her into bed. Now, at 12, she's old enough to read herself. But she still loves this close, quiet time with one of us.



### TRY THIS

If you have concerns, talk with your health care provider or a public health nurse. They can screen for any issues that may make it difficult for your toddler to sleep well.

## Waking in the Night



### DID YOU KNOW

If your child falls asleep somewhere other than her own bed, she's more likely to wake during the night.

Your child may wake up during the night if she's too hot or cold, if she's wet, hungry, teething or sick – or for no reason at all. You can help her learn to go back to sleep on her own by:

- keeping the lights off when you feed or change her during the night
- not making nighttime a time for chatting or playing
- gradually shortening any nighttime feedings so she doesn't fully wake up

If she cries for no particular reason, you can help her learn to settle herself by:

1. going to her, but not picking her up
2. calmly tucking her back into bed and telling her it's time to sleep
3. leaving the room
4. repeating as needed until she falls asleep

You may choose to wait a short time – 2 or 3 minutes – after she starts crying before going to her. If so, over several days you can slowly

increase the amount of time you let her cry before going in. But always check on her right away if she sounds very upset and may be sick or injured.



### BRAIN BUILDER

Give your toddler some choices at bedtime, like which story to read or which pajamas to wear.



### DANGER

If your toddler is under 12 months old, always put her to sleep on her back to lower the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

## Safer Cribs

Ensure:

- the crib is approved by Health Canada (ask your health care provider if you're not sure)
- the mattress is in the lowest position if your toddler is able to sit up
- there are no items she could climb on to fall out of the crib
- there are no mobiles or other hanging objects that could strangle her

See [Baby's Best Chance](#) for more information on safer sleep for your 6-month-old.

## Safer Beds

If your toddler is trying to climb out of the crib, it's time to move her to a bed. Ensure your toddler's bed:

- has a simple design
- has no spaces between the mattress and the headboard or walls
- has its headboard (not the side of the bed) against the wall
- is low to the floor
- has a carpet or quilt on the floor in case she falls out of bed
- has safety rails on all sides
- is the lower bunk if using a bunk bed set
- isn't by a window, if possible, and that all windows in the room have locks

## Bedsharing

### What is bedsharing?

Sleeping in the same bed with your child.

When your child is between 6 months and a year old, the safest place for her to sleep is in her own Health Canada-approved crib. But many families prefer to bedshare for cultural or personal reasons. And some find that they end up bedsharing, even if they hadn't planned to.

Talk with your health care provider about how to balance your family's wishes with the risks of bedsharing. And if you do choose to share a bed, do so as safely as possible. Ensure:

- Your baby is far away from pillows, blankets and duvets.
- Your baby is on her back.
- She isn't swaddled.
- The mattress is on the floor to reduce the risk of a fall.
- The mattress is firm. (No waterbeds, pillowtops, air mattresses or feather beds.)
- The child is on the outside of the bed, not between adults.
- There's space around the bed so the child can't get trapped between the mattress and the wall or a side table.
- The adults in the bed both know that the child is in the bed and are comfortable with it.
- Any long hair is tied back so it can't get wrapped around your child's neck.
- No older children or pets are in the bed.



### DID YOU KNOW

If you have more than one baby, it's safest to have them in their own sleep spaces. If they share the same crib, put them head to head, not side by side.



### DANGER

#### Never share a bed if:

- your baby was born prematurely or weighed less than 2½ kg (5½ lb) at birth, or
- you or your partner:
  - smoke, or if you smoked while pregnant
  - have taken any substances that might make you sleep more heavily, like alcohol, medicine, cannabis or other drugs

Have another adult available to look after your baby if you're drinking alcohol or using any substances.

## Sleep-Related Infant Death

Sleep-related infant death can happen by accident (usually when a child is smothered or suffocated) or by **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** (SIDS or "crib death") – the unexplained death of a healthy child while sleeping. Lessen the risks by:

- putting your baby down to sleep on her back on a firm surface in her own safe sleep space
- making your home smoke-free
- keeping your child warm, but not hot
- breastfeeding
- keeping pillows, toys, heavy blankets and pets out of your child's bed
- carefully considering the risks of bedsharing