

How to get those ZZZ's.

SLEEP:

Establishing appropriate and consistent bedtime routines can help your child develop good sleep habits that benefit the whole family.

Consider your child's developmental needs. Knowing how your child's stage affects her sleeping can help you deal better with bedtime and middle of the night interruptions.

- **Start by considering your child's age when beginning to establish bedtime routines.** Your baby needs help learning how to fall asleep without you. Your toddler needs your assurance and comfort when falling asleep. Older children need a clear, consistent routine for dealing with bedtime.

- **Helping your baby learn to put herself to sleep:**

Put her in her crib, awake but drowsy. If she always falls asleep in your arms, she may feel unable to sleep without you present.

Help him get attached to a stuffed animal that serves as a comfort object. When you feed and hold him, hold the "lovey" also. That way, it will remind him of you.

Develop and maintain a relaxing sequence of bedtime activities. For example, first a feeding, then a song, then a kiss. This routine will be her cue that it's time to sleep.

- **Comfort your toddler as he falls asleep:**

Allow your child time to discharge the frustrations and excitement of the day. It's normal for children to talk to themselves, or play in bed awhile before dozing off.

- **Be firm, consistent and gentle when maintaining bedtime routines with your older child:**

Tell your child what time you expect her to go to bed. Give your child a fifteen minute reminder before bedtime so she can finish anything in which she is involved.

Be clear about what needs to be done before bed, such as getting a drink of water, or brushing his teeth.

Bedtime is a wonderful, quiet time to discuss what happened during your child's day.

If your child gets out of bed and out of her room after she has been put to bed, gently help her return to her bed. In a calm voice tell her it is time for bed and sleeping. Do not read another book or talk with her. This may need to be repeated several times.