Encouraging Good Sleep for your child

Gateshead Primary Care Trust
South Tyneside Primary Care Trust
Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust
Why do some children not sleep well?

Many parents have sleepless nights as it is very common for pre-school children to be wakeful. Once they occur, sleep problems can be treated in a variety of ways. What suits one parent may not be right for another. Is your baby/child’s waking causing a definite problem for you, your partner or other family members?

Most babies under 6 months can wake up regularly during the night, sometimes for a feed.

Once over 6 months babies no longer need a feed during the night so why are they waking?

- Poorly or teething
- Want attention / play
- Dirty nappy
- Too hot or cold
- Napping during the day after 4pm

Once you have established why your baby/child is not sleeping well, you can then try and overcome the problem.
**Bed-time Routine**

1. Encourage good bed-time habits. For example, choose activities that are relaxing so that your baby/child realises it is time for sleep. Bed-time should not include lively games.

2. A bed-time routine could include:
   - bath time
   - ready for bed
   - have a drink
   - story time / cuddle
   - put to bed

3. Choose activities that are relaxing so that your baby realises it is time for sleep.

4. Ensure your baby/child is not attracted by lights and sounds coming through windows and doors.

5. Put your baby/child to bed awake rather than getting them to sleep by rocking or cuddling in your arms. Your baby/child may not learn to fall asleep in their own bed and may want nursing back to sleep if they wake up again.

6. Try to settle your baby/child by talking softly and saying goodnight.
Waking up during the night

If your baby/child wakes during the night:

1. Try and resettle without immediately picking him/her up. Talk softly and give reassurance, then leave the room.

2. If the crying starts again go back and give reassurance again - it is helpful to use the same sentence i.e.
   - ‘go to sleep’
   - ‘night night’

Use a firm voice, or alternatively have no verbal contact.

3. Repeat this routine returning to the room at intervals until your baby/child settles e.g. return at 2 - 4 minutes gradually increasing the time period. Be prepared for this procedure to take several nights or even a week or two before it is effective.
4. If you think a short cuddle is needed this should be given.

5. Once you have decided how to tackle any sleep issues you must be consistent, it would be beneficial that anyone putting the baby/child to sleep follows the same routine.
General Tips

1. Cut out afternoon naps after 4pm.

2. Avoid taking your baby/child into your bed.

3. Make sure your baby/child learns to go to sleep in his/her own cot or bed.

4. Decide on a bed-time routine then stick to it.

5. If you are struggling try to find someone else to take over for the odd night. You will cope better if you can catch up on some sleep yourself.
Remember

Learning new sleeping habits may take time, your baby’s/child’s sleep patterns may get a little worse at first, if your set limits are consistent, good sleep will be encouraged.

It can be common for pre-school children to be wakeful, particularly when they are poorly and their sleep patterns are disrupted. Once they are feeling better sleep patterns should be re-established.

If you would like further help contact your Health Visitor or GP.
NHS South of Tyne and Wear is committed to raising the standard of written information to patients, their carers, people who use the NHS and general public.

This information can be made available in another format or language on request. Please contact the Communications and PR Team Tel: 0191 529 7118 Email: mopil@sotw.nhs.uk