

Solving Naptime Problems

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of *The No-Cry Sleep Solution*

Naps are important for your child's health and growth. A nap refreshes a child so that she can maintain her energy for the rest of the day. Studies show that children who nap are more adaptable, have longer attention spans, and are less fussy than those who don't nap. Does your child need a nap?



Average hours of day and night sleep

Age	Number of naps	Naptime hours	Night sleep hours*	Total night and nap sleep
Newborn	Newborns sleep 16 - 18 hours daily, spread over 6 - 7 sleep periods.			
3 months	3	5 - 6	10 - 11	15
6 months	2	3 - 4	10 - 11	14 - 15
9 months	2	2.5 - 4	11 - 12	14
12 months	1 - 2	2 - 3	11.5 - 12	13.5 - 14
18 months	1 - 2	2 - 3	11.25 - 12	13 - 14
2 years	1	1 - 2.5	11 - 12	13 - 13.5
3-4 years	0 - 1	0 - 1.5	11 - 11.5	11 - 13
5-7 years	0 - 1	0 - 1	11	11 - 12

*These averages don't signify unbroken stretches of sleep since night waking is normal.

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Timing and length of naps

Timing of naps is important. A late nap will prevent your child from being tired at bedtime. Generally, the best nap times are:

- **Two naps:** midmorning (9:00 - 11:00) and early afternoon (12:00 - 2:30)
- **One nap:** early afternoon (12:00 - 2:30); after lunch

If your child tends towards short naps, don't assume it's all she needs. Try these tips for better naps:

- Provide a healthy lunch or snack before nap.
- Keep the room dark.
- Play lullabies or white noise during the nap.
- Dress her in comfortable clothes.

- Be sure that discomfort (teething, allergies, etc.) isn't preventing sleep.

Watch for signs of tiredness

Tired children fall asleep easily. If you miss the signals they become *overtired* and are unable to sleep. Your child may show one or more of these signs that tell you he is tired and ready to nap:

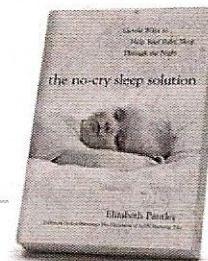
- losing interest in playtime
- becoming whiny or fussy
- losing patience
- having tantrums
- rubbing eyes or yawning
- caressing a lovey or blanket
- asking for a pacifier, bottle or to nurse
- looking glazed or unfocused
- becoming hyperactive

The nap routine

Once you've created a schedule that works with your child's periods of tiredness, follow a simple but specific nap routine. Your child will be comfortable with a pattern to his day. He may predict when naptime approaches and willingly cooperate with you.

Nap routines change

Children's sleep needs change over time. The routine that you set up today won't be the same one you're using a year from now. Be adaptable!



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