Typical sleep behaviour (4) – toddlers 1 to 2 years

Summary

- At this age, toddlers generally sleep 10 to 14 hours in a 24-hour period, including daytime naps of one to three hours.
- Some toddlers may still wake at night and will need you to comfort them, especially if they have night time fears.
- Around 18 months, some toddlers experience sleep regression – if they usually sleep well they may suddenly refuse to go to sleep or wake up during the night. This is temporary and usually resolves as your child gets older.

Toddler sleep patterns and behaviours (1 to 2 years)

From approximately 12 months of age, toddlers tend to sleep better. They generally sleep longer, wake up less often and sleep more at night.

Toddlers aged 12 months to 2 years often sleep 10 to 14 hours within a 24-hour period, including 1 to 3 hours of naps.

This helps to ensure they have energy to grow and function at their best.

Every child is different, so don’t worry too much if your child has different sleep patterns to those described here. If you are concerned about your child, contact your local maternal and child nurse, your doctor or the Maternal and Child Health Line on Tel:13 22 29.

Toddler sleep rhythms at 1 to 2 years

Around this time, your toddler may reduce the number and length of naps they take from two naps to one longer daytime nap.

Your toddler will usually sleep for longer periods overnight, but night waking is still common in some toddlers.

Toddlers’ brains undergo significant development during this age.

As a result, they may develop night-time fears. Your toddler may need additional comfort because of night-time fears.

They may also become more emotionally attached to parents or caregivers, which can cause separation anxiety and distress at bedtime.

They may start to resist going to sleep at night and want to stay up with the family. This generally peaks at around 18 months and tends to go away with age.

Settling your toddler at 1 to 2 years

Some parents and caregivers might find that sleep or settling becomes a concern.

Environmental factors and family relationships are particularly important in this age group to help toddlers sleep and to prevent sleep concerns from arising. Try to be responsive to child’s needs – it is important your toddler knows you are emotionally and physically available if they become distressed. You can do this by knowing your child’s cues, tired signs and the intensity of their cry. By understanding and connecting with your toddler you will be able to support positive sleep patterns.

Routines and environments play a big part in helping toddlers get to sleep – they need a cue to tell them when it is sleep time, which is usually something in their external environment. It could be a dark room or having familiar sounds.

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objects around them.

Limiting screen time at night and having a regular bedtime routine (such as bath, book, song and bed) can also help to prevent and reduce settling difficulties and waking at night.

**Toddlers and sleep regression**

From around 18 months of age, some toddlers who usually sleep well suddenly refuse to go to sleep, or they wake up during the night and do not go back to sleep by themselves.

This is known as **sleep regression**.

Sleep regression is usually temporary and can occur at many points in a child’s life.

It is often associated with periods of high growth and development, but it can also be brought on by factors such as:

- **teething**
- a change in routine
- sickness, (such as **fever**)
- **travel**
- stress

If your toddler experiences sleep regression, stay consistent with bedtime routines. Be calm, and comfort and reassure your child as necessary, but be firm that bedtime means it’s time to go to sleep.

**Some strategies you can use to develop positive sleep behaviour** include:

- Connecting with your toddler – by building a strong relationship so they feel safe and secure.
- Recognising and responding to **tired signs**.
- Using positive and consistent **bedtime routines**.
- **Cot-to-bed transition** – moving your child from cot to bed if they are trying to climb out of their cot. Make sure your toddler’s furniture and sleep environment is safe.

**Maternal and child health nurse visits are important**

Victorian parents have free access to the **Maternal and Child Health Service**, which is a great support after your baby is born.

Specially trained maternal and child health will work with your family to help you care for your child until they are ready to start school.

As part of this service, you will visit a maternal and child health nurse in your local area at 10 key ages and stages in your child’s development. These visits are important because they you an opportunity to identify and address any issues and concerns early in your child’s development.

Visits take place:

- following discharge from hospital (**home visit**)
- **two weeks**
- **four weeks**
- **eight weeks**
- **four months**
- **eight months**
- **one year**
- **18 months**
- **two years**
- **three and a half years**

Families can access the service at other times by telephone or through a centre visit.

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Don't forget your 'green book'

Make sure you take your My Health, Learning and Development – green book with you each time you see your nurse, health professional or immunisation provider so you can jot down any issues, and record information on your baby's growth and development.

If you don't have a green book, let your nurse know.

Where to get help

- Your local maternal and child health service
- Your GP (doctor)
- Maternal and Child Health Line Tel: 13 22 29 – available 24 hours a day for the cost of a local call throughout Victoria
- Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Tel. 03 9419 3000
- Parentline Tel. 13 22 89
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) Tel. 131 450 – available (24 hours, 7 days a week) for callers who speak other languages
- National Relay Service (24 hours a day, every day) – Speak and listen Tel: 1300 555 727, TTY Tel: 133 677, SMS relay Tel: 0423 677 767. Captioned, internet and video relay calls are also available through this service.
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

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