



## Establishing a sleep routine

Many parents feel it will help to let their child to play games or run around prior to going to bed to let them use up their energy. In fact this has the opposite affect and makes them over stimulated and too excited to sleep. It is important that your baby/toddler has a set routine prior to bed and this is used to calm them down and establish sleep patterns. Establishing a routine may take a few nights but be consistent and together you will establish a sleeping pattern that suits you both

Your nighttime routine may be as long as an hour in length but should be what suits you. It mainly needs to be a recognisable pattern that means 'sleep time' and nothing else. Babies are reassured by familiarity and a routine of cuddles, closing the curtains, pats on the back, perhaps playing her favourite music and a kiss goodnight will all help them to settle.

A suggested 60-minute routine could be:

### **First 10 minutes**

Make your baby's last activities of the day soothing and relaxing to give them plenty of warning that it's coming up to bedtime

### **Second 10 minutes**

Take your baby upstairs away from the rest of the family. Dim the lights and take off their daytime clothes. As you do this have a gentle time with them - enjoy giving them a massage or talking quietly with them about the day you've shared

### **Third 15 minutes**

Give your baby a lovely soothing bath. The warm water will instantly relax them and by incorporating happy play into this time you can turn the pre-bedtime routine into a much-anticipated event

### **Fourth 15 minutes**

Take your baby into their dark nursery to dress them into their 'night' clothes. If they still need a last feed you can give it to them now or you can read an older baby a restful bedtime book

### **Fifth 10 minutes**

Use this last part of the routine to incorporate signals that its time for sleep. This might be a favourite phrase: 'Night Night - I love you', a lullaby, switching on a restful mobile or putting a favourite teddy into bed ready to keep your baby company. You may wish to do your massage now.

This is just a suggestion to guide you to establish your own routine-use what ever works best for you both. Whatever routine you do develop will change and adapt as your baby grows.

**Remember:**

- Your baby's room should be a place that makes them feel instantly content and relaxed, do not make it too busy as this will stimulate rather than settle.
- Sleep routines can often be disturbed when your baby is feeling ill (especially after an immunization), teething, or away from home. When this happens try to get back to the routine as quickly as possible.
- Babies often cry after you leave the room, but try and wait for a few minutes. She will often settle herself if you don't go back straight away. If her crying persists, speak to her calmly. Stroke her but try not to lift her from the cot. Reassure your baby that you're there.
- From 3 months start putting your baby to bed when they are awake so they can practice self-soothing activities and learn how to quiet themselves.
- Black out blinds are a real investment -invaluable for blocking out bright morning light and long light evenings, particularly in the summer
- Babies and children sleep better at a temperature slightly below, rather than above normal - 18°C is ideal.
- Once you take your baby upstairs-at whichever point you chose- do not bring your baby back down again.