

Ideas to support you and your toddler

Your toddler needs to feel your unconditional love. Make them feel happy and secure in their sleeping environment.

Consider the way you communicate with your toddler, remembering your child's age and level of understanding. Respond calmly and lovingly, especially at night.

Make yourself comfortable whilst your toddler is settling down to sleep. Take the opportunity to read or use headphones to listen to relaxing music while you are waiting for them to settle.

Stages of sleep

Stage 1 – in this stage we experience a light transitional sleep. This is where drowsiness and sleep begin.

Stage 2 – more stable sleep occurs. Chemicals produced in the brain block the senses making it difficult to be woken.

Stage 3 – this is deep sleep. Growth hormone is released during this stage. Most stage 3 sleep occurs in the first third of the night.

Stage 4 – Rapid Eye Movement (REM).

REM

This is where your eyes move around quickly behind your eyelids and your brainwaves look similar to those of someone who is awake.

Your toddler's development

Your toddler may start to copy adults and other toddlers. They will enjoy pretending and role play and repeating words heard in conversations and books.

Their understanding is developing which will encourage discussions. They can appear bossy and may have tantrums.

Your toddler may begin to show an interest in potty training. This is best being led by your child and should not be rushed.

It is normal for children to be in nappies at night-time at this age.

Useful links

<https://www.basisonline.org.uk/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/sleep-problems-in-children/>

<https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/sleep-hub/common-sleep-problems-in-children/>

For impartial and confidential advice or information on the services provided by Bridgewater or to receive this leaflet in an alternative format call our Patient Services team on 0800 587 0562.

www.twitter.com/Bridgewater_NHS

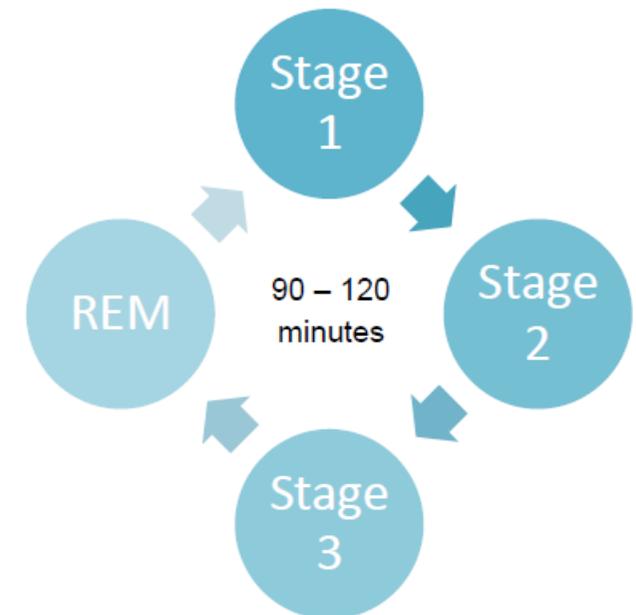
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Your toddler's sleep at 2 to 3 years



Quality first and foremost

Your sleeping toddler

Your toddler's sleep-wake-cycle (circadian rhythm) is now well established. They may sleep from 9 to 12 hours at night.

Your toddler's sleep pattern is now fairly similar to an adult, although it is closely linked to and affected by their behaviour.

Daytime naps

Your toddler will usually have a one to two hour nap during the day. This will slowly reduce until they cut naps out completely.

Sleep challenges

Many toddlers face common sleep challenges.

These can include:

- Resisting going to bed
- Early waking
- Night-time awakenings
- Fears and nightmares.

Changes to family circumstances, such as starting nursery, potty training, holidays, moving to a bed and a new baby in the family, can all cause sleep to get worse.

A toddler's drive for doing things by themselves, and an increase in their movement, mental processes and social abilities, can interfere with their sleep.

In addition, their ability to get out of bed, separation anxiety and the development of their imagination can lead to sleep challenges.

Daytime sleepiness and challenging behaviour may signal poor sleep patterns. For example, moving to a 'big bed' when your toddler still wants to be 'your baby' may cause confusion and resistance at first.

Bedtime routine

- Give your toddler encouraging reminders of the next step in their routine. This will help to keep bedtime calm and relaxed.
- Keep lighting low at night and use natural light in the daytime. Black-out blinds may help during summer months.
- Keep the temperature in the bedroom at a comfortable temperature, ideally 16-18 degrees Celsius.
- If your toddler tends to fall asleep with a certain comfort in place, such as using a night light (red light is said to be more relaxing) or having the door partly open, ensure it can be maintained all night.
- If they have a special comfort object for bedtime, keep a spare in case it gets lost or needs a wash.
- Avoid using screens, such as iPads, smart phones, computers, televisions, one hour before bedtime, as the light from the screen can interfere with the production of melatonin; this is the hormone that makes us feel drowsy.

- Try activities, such as jigsaws, colouring and playdough, as they are more calming and help with relaxation. A bath may help too.
- Always end the day with praise and happy thoughts. Bear this in mind when choosing a bedtime story.

Trouble settling down

Certain drinks near to bedtime, such as blackcurrant juice, caffeine and hot chocolate, can overstimulate the bladder and cause a disturbed sleep. Try more soothing drinks instead, such as warm milk or water.

Ailments such as coughs, colds, blocked nose, eczema, teething and chickenpox may impact on your child's comfort levels during the night, affecting their ability to settle. Treating these ailments will help your toddler settle back into their usual sleep pattern.

Try lying on their bed to check comfort.

Consider staying in your toddler's bedroom for a while if they need the comfort of you being there when they are settling to sleep at night.

Gradually reduce the amount of time you are in your toddler's room. If they become distressed when you attempt to leave, try staying in their room longer and offering more comfort. This may take time but it is okay and will resolve.