

Tip Sheets

Safe and Healthy Naptime Routines

Sleep is essential for the optimal growth and development of young children. Proper sleep has been shown to reduce pediatric obesity, regulate emotions, and decrease the likelihood of behavioral challenges in children. It is important to help children develop healthy sleep habits early in their lives so they can grow and develop along the pathway to reach their greatest potential. This includes creating routines, practicing safe sleep, and ensuring children are getting enough rest.

Establish Routines

Many children spend a lot of their time at child care. Having a routine will make things smoother for everyone and will also help promote safe and healthy sleep outside of child care. **To ensure good naps/rest time, create consistency and predictability.** Consistent:

- Conditions
- Routine
- Times for rest

Creating Optimal Conditions

- Minimize noise and distractions by providing an area for children who are resting separate from children who are engaged in activity.
- Lower lighting to a level that signals it is time for rest but is bright enough to observe safe sleeping conditions (you can see skin color, blankets are not covering heads, etc.).
 - Dimming the lights is also a good way to signal the transition into rest time.
- Each child should have their own designated crib, cot, and space in the room. Note of sleep patterns and plan space accordingly.

- I.e. children who are consistent sleepers and need good, solid naps should rest in the space in which they're least likely to have their sleep disrupted (such as away from the door). Children who get up from nap earlier should rest in a different area so as not to disturb still-sleeping children.
- Create a "nap map" with children's names and rest location in the classroom, so if there's a change in caregivers the routine will stay consistent. You can also note which children prefer their back rubbed, etc.

Health and Hygiene

- Launder children's blankets and sheets weekly unless soiled due to sickness, etc.
- Store children's sleep items separately. Do not stack blankets on each other or on top or between cots.
- Place cots three feet apart if space allows, or as far apart from each other as possible to reduce the spread of germs, minimize disruptions, and create space to reach children.
 - You can also alternate the children head to toe to create space.
 - Do not use screens between children, which block your view, limit supervision, or could fall and cause injury.

Safe Sleep for Infants

- Follow guidelines set by the by the **National Institute of Health's "Safe to Sleep" program.**
- Infants should all have their own crib.

- Set the thermostat in the room to a comfortable temperature.



- No sleeping in equipment. If a baby falls asleep in a bouncy seat or swing, they should be moved to the crib as soon as possible.
- Do a monthly crib check for hazards and lose parts (rails, bolts, etc.). Check the Consumer Product Safety Commission website for recalls.
- Avoid placing cribs near blinds, cords, fans, etc. to avoid strangulation hazards.
- If infants are sleeping in a separate room use a monitor so you can constantly hear the room. Do a visual check every 5-10 minutes.
- Remove bibs, clothing with hoods, teething necklaces, or any other potential choking hazards before placing children in their crib.
- Remove any items such as stuffed animals or pacifier attachments. **Pacifiers are okay.**
- Use a firm, tight fitting crib mattress with a tight-fitting sheet. There shouldn't be any loose space between the mattress and the crib rails. Infants can use an appropriately sized sleep sack instead of a blanket.

How Much Sleep Do Children Need?

Rest can take the form of actual napping (infants through early preschool years), or quiet time once children grow out of napping regularly. For children who do not sleep, have a plan in place to

provide the time and space for quiet play such as looking at books or playing a quiet board game.

Recommended Sleep Amounts for Children

The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following sleep durations (this includes a combination of both nighttime and daytime sleep):

- Newborns: 14–17 total hours
- Infants: 12–15 total hours
- Toddlers: 11–14 total hours
- Preschoolers: 10–13 total hours

Working with Families

Creating healthy sleep patterns and expectations benefits families, too. Sleep affects the entire household. When a child has a regular sleep schedule and pattern, it makes planning easier, and parents will rest better themselves.

Have a good partnership with families so both parties know when sleep has been disrupted or when there might be a change. Share information with families or counsel them regarding sleep. Articulate sleep policies and procedures to families prior to enrollment. This is also a good time to ask families about their child's sleep preferences.

Additional Resources

National Institute of Health: Safe to Sleep
<https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov>

The National Sleep Foundation
<https://www.thensf.org>

For more information, visit www.inclusivechildcare.org.

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