



PARENTS COUNT

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS



Smoothing Your Day

Morning Madness

Mornings can be tough. Getting everyone dressed, fed, and gathering the things everyone will need for the day can be very frustrating. You might find yourself yelling at your kids. What can you do to get your morning moving? The secret to a good morning lies in getting kids to bed at a regular time and getting them the sleep they need.

Many parents keep their children up later than is good for them. This is often because they want to spend time together. But tired children misbehave more and the time together is not as pleasant as time spent with a well-rested child.

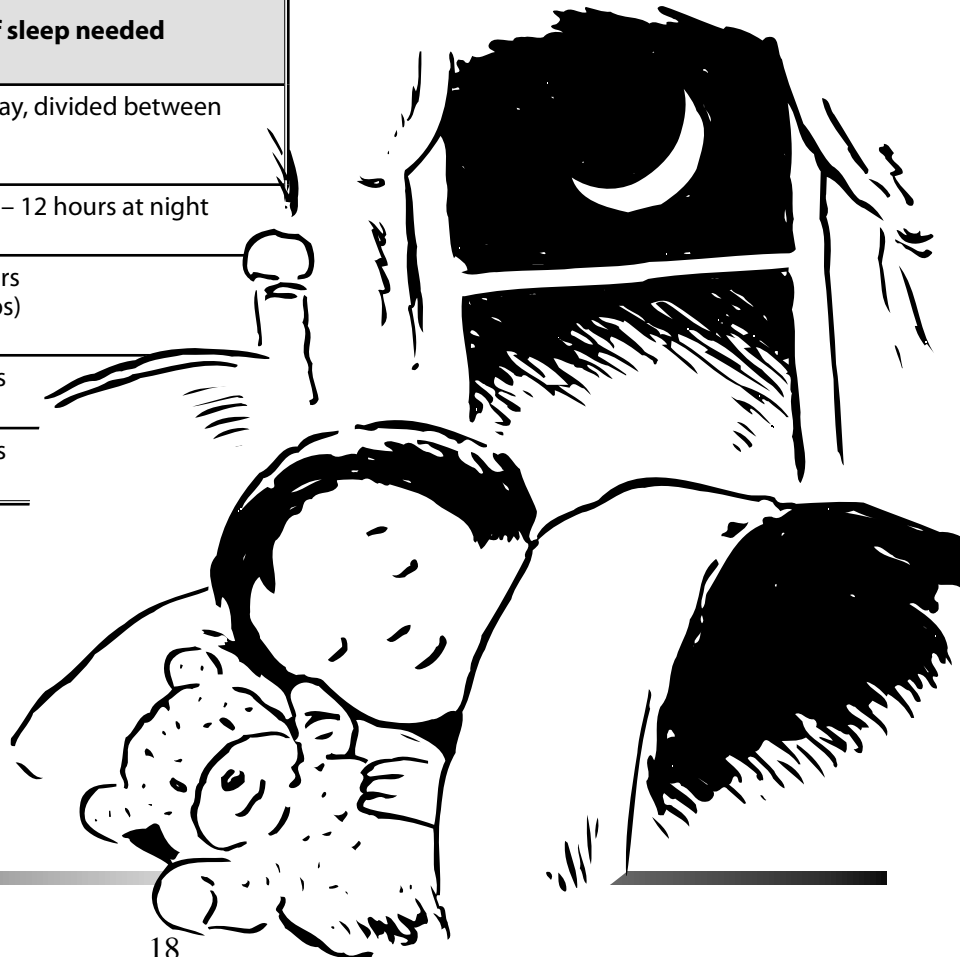
How much sleep do children really need? While each child is unique, there are suggested ranges of the amount of sleep that children need, based on age.

Age of child	Amount of sleep needed
0-6 months	16 – 20 hours per day, divided between day and night
6 – 12 months	3 hours per day, 11 – 12 hours at night
1-2 years	total of 10 – 13 hours (includes 1 or 2 naps)
2 – 3 years	total of 9 – 12 hours
3 – 8 years	total of 9 – 12 hours

Bedtime Routines

Do you have trouble getting your child to go to bed? Some people think that keeping their child up later will help them sleep better. This actually works in the opposite way. When children are up late they become overtired, making it more difficult for them to settle down and go to sleep.

Make a bedtime routine that you follow every night. Lowering the lights, a warm bath, calming music, and cuddling with a parent to read a story can be all parts of a successful bedtime routine to help your child calm down and prepare for sleep.



Gentle Goodbyes

Has your child ever sobbed when you leave her at child care? It can be distressing when your child is crying and wants you to stay. Separating can be hard on both parents and children. Separation anxiety is a normal stage of development for healthy, emotionally secure young children.

Most often this happens when the child is new to child care. You can make this type of adjustment easier by visiting child care together before your child begins. Have some fun together. If you show that you like and feel comfortable with the caregivers, your child will feel more accepting of these new people in his life. If your child has a favorite “blankie” or soft toy, bring it to child care to help comfort him. Games can be a great comfort as well. Playing “peek-a-boo” or “Where’s the baby?” reminds children that what goes away comes back.

Sometimes a child who was already adjusted to child care will suddenly begin to cry for you in the mornings. Many parents worry that something upsetting to the child must be happening at child care. But there are natural periods of increased separation anxiety, one around the age of eight months and another around the age of eighteen months, when children are more clingy and want only you.

While it may be tempting to slip out when your child is playing, it is a mistake that will make your child more anxious. If you want your child to become more comfortable and well adjusted, tell her “goodbye” each day before you leave. Make it short and say it only once. Remind your child, “I will be back, and Jessica will take care of you.” If someone else will be picking up your child, make sure you tell her who that will be. Make a routine, such as a special kiss or a wave from the window. When you do the same thing every day, your child feels reassured. Gentle goodbyes help children feel safe and comfortable in child care.



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