



Kim Rogers

[kim@sleepingwellconsulting.com](mailto:kim@sleepingwellconsulting.com)

[www.sleepingwellconsulting.com](http://www.sleepingwellconsulting.com)

## 5 Steps to Better Sleep Tonight

If your baby or toddler is having trouble sleeping through the night, the first thing you should know is... you're not alone! Studies show that up to 30% of babies have sleep problems, and that 75% of those parents would like to change their babies' sleep habits. The good news is that there are some quick and easy things you can do - starting tonight - to help your little one starting sleeping all through the night... and taking long, restful naps during the day!

**Step 1:** Choose an early bedtime. The best time to put your baby or toddler to bed is sometime between 6 and 8 o'clock in the evening. This ensures that your child will be able to get a solid 11-13 hours of sleep during the night. (And yes... that is how much sleep children should be getting every night up until the age of about 10.)

**Step 2:** Put your child to sleep in the same place every night. Whether your child has a room of their own or shares a room with parents or siblings, it's important that you put your son or daughter to sleep in the same place every night (and for naps during the day as much as possible.) Putting your child to bed in a familiar place lets them know they are safe and that they are in a place where sleep is expected of them.

**Step 3:** Create a predictable bedtime routine. Consistency and predictability are really important to babies and toddlers. When they know what to expect at bedtime, it makes it \*much\* easier for them to make the transition from waking to sleeping - and that's why creating a bedtime routine is so important! A good example of a bedtime routine might be something like this:

- 6:20 p.m. Bath
- 6:35 p.m. Put on pajamas
- 6:40 p.m. Breastfeeding or bottle feeding (NOTE: Do NOT let your child fall asleep while feeding!)
- 6:55 p.m. Story or songs



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- 7:00 p.m. Into crib or bed

Your bedtime routine shouldn't take more than about 45 minutes, and it's VERY important that the routine is the same every single night. The repetition and predictability are what let your child know that he or she will soon be expected to fall asleep. I often say to families that the purpose of the routine is not for “winding down and getting sleepy,” but rather, it is a set of steps that cues the mind and body that sleep is coming next.

**Step 4:** Put your baby to bed AWAKE! If you've been rocking, nursing, or otherwise soothing your baby to sleep, this is going to seem like a tough one... but it's actually the most important step! It's only by letting your baby fall asleep WITHOUT your help at bedtime that he or she can learn the skills necessary to stay asleep through the night. When children go into Stage 1 or Stage 2 sleep because they are rocked to sleep, nursed to sleep, or held to sleep, they often rouse again later when they are placed into their beds to go to sleep. They may sometimes sleep for an hour, they may sometimes only sleep 15 or 30 minutes. Hopefully, they may sleep a few hours. Oftentimes, rocking, nursing, or bouncing them to sleep can take a very long time. This is because it takes longer for babies who've grown past the 4-month milestone to go into Stage 1, Stage 2, and then the deeper stages of sleep (Stage 3 and 4). If your child is able to go into Stage 1 and Stage 2 sleep on his or her own, they will be able to transition sleep cycles on their own, and therefore go back to sleep in the night without the use of sleep props.

**Step 5:** If your baby wakes up during the night, wait a few minutes before intervening.

Babies and adults both wake up several times every night. It's biologically impossible to sleep through the night, but most adults think they do sleep through. These wakings are so brief that they don't remember them the next morning. However, many babies will immediately start to fuss or cry when they wake up. This is simply because they haven't learned how to fall asleep on their own. If a baby has been nursed or rocked to sleep at bedtime since birth, it's not surprising that they wouldn't know how to fall asleep



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independently. The good news is that many babies can figure out how to get back to sleep within just a few minutes of waking up in the night! If your child continues to fuss or cry for more than a few minutes, you'll want to go in and offer some comfort, but it's important to let your child do the work of falling back to sleep. You can speak softly to your child and do some gentle rubbing or patting, but you should try to allow your child to go back to sleep on his or her own when possible.

There you have it...the 5 most important things you need to know about getting your child to sleep through the night. Of course, it's important to keep in mind that every child is a little different - there's no "magic formula" that will work 100% of the time for every baby! My passion (and my profession) is helping parents like you develop customized plans for solving child sleep problems, so if you have any questions about what you've just read, please get in touch! Here's my link to [book a discovery call](#).

Sleep well,

Kim