

## SLEEPING THROUGH THE NIGHT



Nighttime wakings in children are common. The “ignoring” approach is the most widely studied method of helping children to sleep through the night, and is found to be effective in over 80% of children. This approach aims to “train” your child to return to sleep on his own. There are two types:

**Cold Turkey:** Leaving your child to cry after first reassuring yourself that all is well and there is no other reason for your child’s distress. Improvement can be seen in as little as 3–5 days.

**Gradual Approach:** Allowing your child to cry for gradually longer periods before returning briefly. You may find this more acceptable than the “cold turkey” method, although it can take longer to see results. The basic elements of the gradual approach are:

<p><b>The First Night</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After placing your child in bed to fall asleep alone, leave the room and allow him to cry for about five minutes. If your child is still crying after that time, return to his room for reassurance that you’re still there. You can speak to him briefly and pat his back a few times, but don’t pick him up.</li> <li>• After 2–3 minutes, leave the room again (even if he’s still crying). If your child continues to cry for 10 minutes, you can return to his room briefly for reassurance, but be sure to leave after 2–3 minutes. If he is still crying after 15 minutes you can return again. For the rest of the night, wait for 15 minutes at most.</li> <li>• Your child will probably fall asleep during one of these 15-minute periods. If your child wakes up again during that first night, you can use the same method of letting him cry for 5, 10, and then 15 minutes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Next Night</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start off by waiting for 10 minutes and increasing by 5 minutes to a maximum of 20 minutes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nights After That</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each night, increase the time of the “First Wait” by 5 minutes.</li> </ul>

Whatever approach you use, start the training when you can afford to lose some sleep for up to a week. It’s essential to stick to the plan. If you give in during the training (e.g., let your child fall asleep in your bed), then you may have to start all over again.

<p><b>Helpful Resources</b></p> <p><b>Books</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peterson J, Peterson M. <i>The Sleep Fairy</i>. Omaha NE: Behave’N Kids Press, 2003. A bedtime story with a reward system to help children get to sleep and stay asleep.</li> <li>• Ferber R. <i>Solve Your Child’s Sleep Problems</i>. Simon &amp; Schuster, 2006.</li> <li>• Mindell J. <i>Take Charge of Your Child’s Sleep: The Complete Guide to Sleep Solutions—From Preschool to High School</i>. Marlowe &amp; Company, 2005.</li> <li>• Weissbluth M. <i>Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child</i>. New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999</li> <li>• American Academy of Pediatrics. <i>American Academy of Pediatrics Guide to Your Child’s Sleep</i>. Villard, 1999.</li> </ul> <p><b>Internet</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.sleepfoundation.org">www.sleepfoundation.org</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.sleepfoundation.org/hottopics/index.php?secid=11&amp;id+255">www.sleepfoundation.org/hottopics/index.php?secid=11&amp;id+255</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.kidshealth.org/parent">www.kidshealth.org/parent</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.babycenter.com/sleep">www.babycenter.com/sleep</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.aap.org/family/sleep.htm">www.aap.org/family/sleep.htm</a></li> </ul>
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