



Early Waking

How Do I Keep My Child Sleeping Past Dawn?

The million dollar question! At what point is it reasonable to expect your child will sleep until a more respectable hour in the morning? When can you kiss the sunrise goodbye?

First, (and sadly for some) every child is different and your child may just be a naturally early riser. For these children, try one of the following strategies which may allow you to have an extra half hour's sleep-in:

- Put a clock beside their bed and either teach them the basics of telling the time, or draw them a picture of what the clock face looks like when they are allowed to get up.
- Provide them with some quiet entertainment that may encourage them to stay in bed - a few action figures, a book or two, a join-the-dots activity.
- If they do want to get out of bed, make sure they know what the house rules are.
- If they are starving when they wake up, you may just have to get up to give them breakfast - although some children love to get their own bowl of cereal if you leave everything out that they need and put the milk in a small jug in the fridge. This of course depends on the age of the child, as you would not expect a three year old to get their own breakfast!
- Make sure that their room stays dark. There's nothing faster at waking a slumbering child than the sun streaming into their room. If their room captures all the morning light, make sure that the window coverings are heavy. You could try adding a 100% block-out lining to the existing curtains, or put up a set of curtains over a blind.
- Don't expect them to go to bed early and sleep late. Most pre-schoolers need between 10-12 hours of sleep at night, so if they are still keeping the bedtime of their babyhood - asleep at 7pm - you probably have to expect that they will wake early. Perhaps try making their bedtime a little later to encourage a later start to the day.
- Keep the house quiet. Once upon a time, your child slept on through all sorts of household noise. Those days are long gone, so if you or your partner has to get up early, try pulling their door closed and keeping noise to a minimum.
- Try to encourage them to have a morning stretch in bed each day. If your child is in the habit of bouncing out of bed the second their eyes open, they'll never learn the joys of a sleep-in, but if they wake to some quiet time in bed they may occasionally roll over and drift off again.

How to Shift Bedtime:

If you decide that the key to a more reasonable waking time is to shift your child's bedtime to a little later, try this:

- Your child will adjust to the move easiest if you change their bedtime in small increments. Try moving it by quarter of an hour at a time.
- Sleep rhythms can take a week or two to change (just think about how long it takes to adjust to daylight saving each year) so expect it to take a couple of weeks before you see any change to their sleep patterns in the morning.
- Once you've settled into the 15 minute change, try another 15 minutes. Keep going until you reach a bed time that is appropriate for your child.

TIP!

Don't let them watch TV in the early hours of the morning as a way of allowing you to get some extra sleep - you may find that this activity actually encourages them to wake earlier and earlier.