

Sleep - Early Morning Riser

Definition

- Children who wake up early before their parents do, usually between 5 and 6 AM.
- They come out of their bedroom and want everyone to get up. A few are still in the crib and they just cry.
- They are excited about the new day and want to share it with their parents. If the parents don't respond, they make a racket.
- Such children are called early morning risers.

Health Information

Causes of Early Morning Riser

- The most common cause is too much sleep. They are well rested.
- Early morning risers are not waking early on purpose. They are no longer tired. They've been put to bed too early the night before, had too many naps, or had a nap that was too long.
- Some children also just need less sleep than the average child. Such children often have a parent who needs only 6 hours or so of sleep at night.
- A smaller group of children are not well rested. They wake up early because of a bad habit that has developed. They are allowed to go back to sleep in the parent's bed, eat breakfast or watch videos at 5 AM. Since they are still tired, they fall back to sleep again within an hour. These habits may persist even after the original cause of too long a nap is removed.

Care Advice

- 1. Reduce the Length of Naps:**
 - Assume your child is getting too much sleep during the day.
 - Most children over 1 year of age need only one nap, unless they are sick.
 - If cutting back to one nap doesn't help, shorten the nap to a maximum of 90 minutes.
 - Also, make sure your child gets exercise after his nap, so he'll be tired at night.
- 2. Delay Bedtime until 8 or 9 PM:**
 - Reducing naps and delaying bedtime should cure your child unless he has a below-average sleep requirement.
- 3. Establish a Rule About Waking Early:**
 - Rule: If you wake up early, stay in your bedroom and play quietly.
 - Get your child a special lamp plugged into a timer. Set the timer for 6 AM. Tell him he can't leave his bedroom until the light comes on.
 - Other gadgets: You could also plug a video or music playing device into a timer.
 - Tell him he can play quietly until then. Help him put out special toys or books the night before.
 - Also, tell your child, "It's not polite to wake up someone who is sleeping, unless you are sick or it's an emergency. Grownups need sleep too."
- 4. Remove any Bad Habits that are Present:**
 - Don't allow any eating, screen time, or fun time in your bed before 6 AM.

5. **Keep in Bedroom Until 6 AM if Sleeps in Regular Bed:**
 - If he comes out of his room, take him back quickly but in a loving way.
 - If he comes out again, close the bedroom door. Tell him you can open it as soon as he's in bed. Every 10 minutes or so, open the door. In a loving way, ask him if he's ready to stay in bed now.
 - If this is a chronic problem, consider putting up a gate the night before.
 - If less than 3 years, consider putting him back in the crib for a few nights.
6. **Leave In Crib Until 6 AM if Sleeps in Crib:**
 - Put some books or quiet toys in his crib the night before.
 - If he cries, go in once to reassure him and remind him of the toys. If he cries again, ignore it. If crying continues, visit him briefly every 5-10 minutes to reassure him that all is well and you love him.
 - Don't turn on the lights, talk much, remove him from the crib early, or stay more than 1 minute.
7. **If You Meet Strong Resistance, Change the Wakeup Time Gradually:**
 - Some children will protest about the new rule, especially if they have been allowed to crawl into their parents' bed in the morning.
 - In that case, move ahead a little more gradually. If your child has been awakening at 5 AM, help him wait until 5:15 for 3 days. Set a timer lamp for that time. After your child has adjusted to 5:15, change the timer to 5:30. Move the wakeup time forward every 3 or 4 days.
8. **Reward Good Behavior:**
 - Give a treat for following the rule.
 - Praise your child for not waking other people in the morning.
 - A star chart or special treat at breakfast will help your child improve.
9. **What to Expect:**
 - If parents enforce the new rule, most children adapt within 4 to 7 days.
 - Expect some crying and protest during the transition.
 - Young children normally cry when they don't get their way.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child is not sleeping better after you try this program for 2 weeks
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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