

**Fun and
Resources
for
06-16-2020**



Your Preschooler and Bedtime

Wondering how to get your three, four or five year old into bed -- and how to get him to stay there all night? You're not alone! I hear from parents all the time about their preschoolers falling asleep on the couch or in front of the TV, anywhere but their own beds.



Some people think that preschoolers should be able to put themselves to bed, and maybe there are some four year olds, somewhere, who do. But 99% of kids five and under need a couple hours of calming downtime that includes dinner at home, and then a full-blown bedtime routine, with storytime

and snuggling, in order to fall asleep easily at night.

After that, whether the parent can walk out of the room and let the child fall asleep on his own, or has to lie down with the child, will depend on three factors:

1. Whether you got lucky and this child falls asleep easily by himself.
2. Whether you have "taught" this child to put himself to sleep.
3. Whether your child is relaxed, or has a full backpack of stress and unfinished emotions from his day.

How to get your child to stay in bed?



Create safety.

It is completely normal for young children to have fears and worries. Sure, you know they're safe in bed, but they don't necessarily feel that way. They're little people in a big, scary world. If you're not there to keep them safe, they can easily feel frightened, alone in the dark. And all kids build up an emotional backpack of small fears and upsets throughout their day. As they close their eyes at night, those feelings they've been fending off can swamp them and make them too anxious to settle into sleep.

So if your child expresses fear, listen and acknowledge. Don't ridicule or tell him to grow up. (He's a little kid, remember?) Don't offer rational arguments; fears aren't rational and your child will stay frightened. What he needs is your support to feel safer. Say "I hear you're worried about monsters...That can be scary...Let's do something about that."

If your child is afraid of "Monsters"

If your child is afraid of "Monsters" empower her by making some "Monster Spray" that she can spray around the room. All you need is lavender and water; some people add glitter, and glycerin will keep the glitter suspended in the bottle to make it more magical. Be sure to label the bottle so it looks powerful: "Do not use around monsters. Will make monsters disappear." Or get a broom and sweep the monsters out of the closet together, and put them in the trashcan, and take it out of your child's room.

These approaches work because they respond on the level of the fear, rather than just denying it. But be light about the whole process, rather than grim. You want to communicate to your child that this is not an emergency, but rather a small challenge that you can support her to solve. Talk to the monsters in a powerful way that puts them in their place: "Monsters aren't allowed in Samantha's bedroom....You monsters know better than this...Time to go now!"

Use play to diminish anxiety earlier in the evening.

Help your child work through those anxieties by roughhousing in a way that gets your child laughing for ten minutes. You can let him be a scary monster and act frightened in a goofy way, or you can just get him laughing out his fears indirectly, by being a bucking bronco. Don't do this right before bed, or it will wind your child up. After dinner is a good time, followed by a bath and story to calm down.

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Teach relaxation techniques

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Just as some adults have a harder time getting to sleep at night, so do some children. Help your child learn to relax into sleep. For some kids, music helps. Others like to listen to a guided meditation that teaches them to breathe deeply. You can also teach your child to inhale deeply and then exhale slowly and fully, which downshifts the body's alert systems.

Make sure the bed feels cozy, and add a rail.

Kids will settle better in a bed where they feel safe and secure. So a toddler bed low to the ground, or a single mattress on the floor, with a partial rail, will help them relax. By contrast, a bed high off the ground, or a double bed, can make kids restless.

Stick to a routine

Stick to a routine, since the same order of things every night increases your child's sense of safety.

Regulate your own emotions.

It's natural to get frustrated when you just want your child to sleep, but yelling at him will make him feel less safe, and undermine your efforts to help him enjoy settling into his bed.

Offer to check on her.

If your child knows that you will come look in on her in five minutes, and then again in five more minutes, she is much more likely to be able settle into sleep. Tell her you won't say anything, you will just come check. And then do it. Just pause in the door. She will probably be waiting for you to come and will notice your presence. Helping her feel secure this way might be all she needs, and you can gradually ease out of it.

Don't let the habit of getting up get started.

Use the process of helping your child learn to fall asleep that's outlined on the [Toddlers and Sleep page \(/ages-stages/toddlers/helping-your-toddler-learn-to-put-himself-to-sleep\)](/ages-stages/toddlers/helping-your-toddler-learn-to-put-himself-to-sleep).

If your child does get up, be matter of fact but boring as you return your child to his bed.

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"It's time to sleep....I will be right here...you are safe in your bed."

If your child is afraid night after night,

If your child is afraid night after night, encourage him to draw what he's afraid of. This helps him master it. You can even help him talk to the monster, or whatever he draws: "No monsters allowed in my room. You have to sleep outside our house!"

If she gets up repeatedly, give her one "Get Out of Bed Free" card, every night.

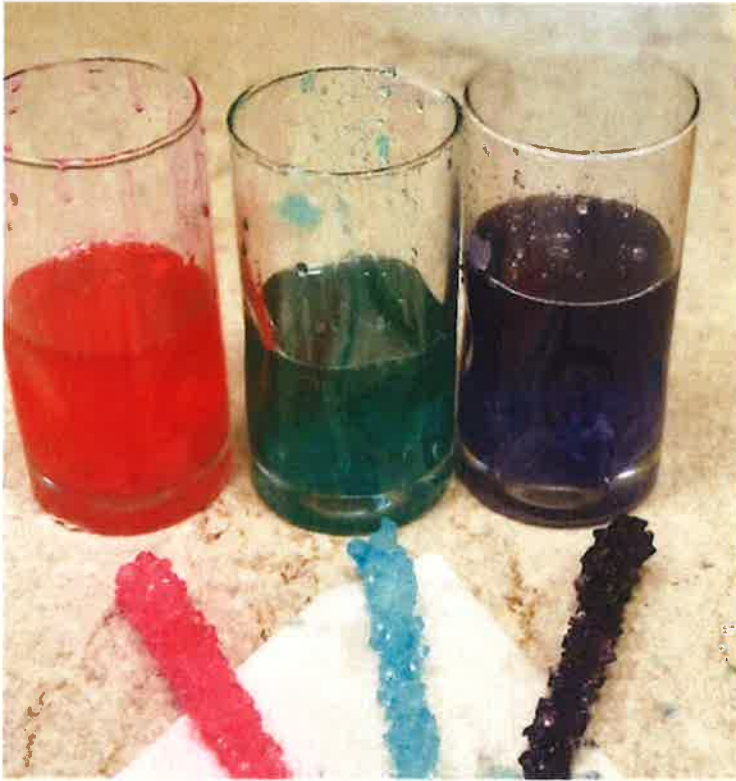
She can use it that night, or save it for when she really needs it. This reassures her that if she really needs to go find you, she can. Many kids prefer to save these cards, though, and it stops the habit of getting up.

Many, many preschoolers wake up at night. Many spend all or part of the night, most nights, in their parents' beds. There's no shame in that, if it's your preference. Biologically speaking, it's normal for three and four year olds to sleep cuddled up with a parent or sibling. But if you do want to teach your child to sleep in his own bed, it is certainly possible at this age.

For full step by step suggestions on teaching your child to fall asleep by himself, please read the section on [Toddlers and Sleep \(/ages-stages/toddlers/helping-your-toddler-learn-to-put-himself-to-sleep\)](#). And then you can indulge yourself in feeling lucky for a moment, because Preschoolers find it easier to learn to fall asleep without their parents than toddlers do. Aren't you glad you waited?

[Click here to watch Dr. Laura's video "When Your Three-Year-Old Takes Over An Hour To Fall Asleep."](#) (<http://www.ahaparenting.com/videos/when-your-three-year-old-takes-over-an-hour-to-fall-asleep>)

Make Rock Candy



1. Boil **2 cups** of water in a saucepan.

2. Stir in **6 cups** of white sugar until dissolved.

3. Turn off heat.

4. Once cooled,

pour the solution into a **glass or jar**. You will need one jar per stick of rock candy you want to make.

5. Add food coloring.

6. Wet a **wooden stick** and roll it in sugar. Place the stick in the middle of the jar and secure with a **clothespin** to avoid crystals forming along the sides. Watch the sugar crystallize and grow over a few days. When enough crystals have formed, remove, allow to air dry, and enjoy!

HEALTHY EATING



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Tips for Families from the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Healthy Habits Start Early



Good eating habits begin early in your child's life. As early as infancy, you can help your child grow lifelong healthy eating habits. You are your child's best role model so while you help her to eat healthy, try to do the same too!

Healthy Feeding and Eating

For Your Infant

- It is important to breastfeed for at least 6 months. She will be more likely to have a healthy weight as she gets older.
- Put breast milk or formula, not cereal, in your baby's bottle. Cereal adds extra calories that she doesn't need.
- Try to wait until your baby is around 6 months to start healthy solid foods like pureed vegetables, jarred baby foods, and infant cereals. Starting solid foods too early can lead to problems with overweight and obesity later.
- Around 8 or 9 months try offering your baby small amounts of healthy finger foods like grilled chicken, cooked carrots, and cut up strawberries. This will help your baby learn to eat healthy.
- Breast milk, formula, and water are the best drink choices for your baby. Soda pop, 100% fruit juice, and sport drinks add extra calories to her diet and can harm her new teeth.

For Your Toddler

- Offer your toddler healthy snacks like small cubes of cheese, sliced banana, or whole grain crackers two to three times per day. This will help him stay full in between meals and reduce hunger-related temper tantrums.
- Try to be patient with picky eaters. He may need to try a food 10 to 15 times over several months before he will eat it.
- Try giving your toddler a choice between two healthy options. He will be more likely to eat healthy food if he picks it out.
- Milk and water are the healthiest drink choices for your toddler. Soda pop, 100% fruit juice, and sport drinks add extra calories to his diet and can harm his teeth.

For Your Preschooler

- Let your child help you in making healthy meals and snacks. She will be more likely to try healthy foods if she helps out.
- Try to keep your kitchen stocked with simple, healthy snacks like carrots, sliced apples and peanut butter, or string cheese. This will help you and your preschooler eat healthy, even on busy days.
- Milk and water are the healthiest drink choices for your preschooler. Soda pop, 100% fruit juice, and sport drinks add extra calories to her diet and can harm her teeth.

For Yourself and Family

- Your child is learning healthy habits by watching you. Try to eat healthy too.
- Set playtime, mealtime, and bedtime routines to make day-to-day life less stressful.
- Talk with your child's doctor, Head Start staff, and other parents to get healthy eating tips.



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HEALTHY BREATHING AT HOME



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Tips for Families from the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Help Prevent Asthma: Keep Your Home Smoke-Free

Why Is It Important?

- Children should be in places that are smoke-free, all of the time.
- Secondhand and thirdhand smoke are triggers for asthma, but you can avoid them.
- Cigarette smoke and e-cigarette smoke contain chemicals, including some that can cause cancer.

What are E-cigarettes or Vapes?

E-cigarettes produce vapor-containing flavored liquids and nicotine. The vapor is not harmless and can damage children's growing lungs.

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a condition that causes swelling and narrowing of the airways. Asthma can cause chest pains and tiredness, and make people wheeze and cough.

What Is Secondhand Smoke?

Secondhand smoke is tobacco smoke in the air. It is the smoke that people breathe in from cigarettes, e-cigarettes or vapes, pipes, and cigars.

What Is Thirdhand Smoke?

Thirdhand smoke is smoke that stays on surfaces and fabric even after someone finishes smoking.



Things You Can Do to Help Your Child

- The most important thing you can do to help a child with asthma is to have a smoke-free home.
- Secondhand smoke is never safe.
- Secondhand smoke can cause infections.
- Because children are smaller and still growing, secondhand smoke is even more dangerous for them than it is for adults.
- Children are in the hospital for asthma more often than for most other health problems.
- Children with asthma miss more days of school than children without asthma.
- If a child has asthma, breathing in secondhand smoke can cause more severe asthma attacks.
- Being near secondhand smoke can cause children without asthma to have asthma-like symptoms.
- Chemicals from tobacco smoke (thirdhand smoke) may stay in the air and on your clothes for days or weeks after a cigarette is put out.
- Thirdhand smoke is never safe.
- Your pediatrician can help you or others quit smoking.



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