

To nap or not?

Decades ago, a day at school for a kindergartener would usually involve an afternoon nap. Today, some schools have phased that out, leaving parents to wonder what's right.

[Luis Garcia, MD](#), an OSF HealthCare pediatrician, says daytime sleep plays an important role in a child's development. He says parents should look at it in terms of daytime sleep and nighttime sleep added up to total sleep. He stresses that each child has unique needs, and you should get to know your child's sleep habits. But there are guidelines. For young kids, Dr. Garcia says nighttime sleep stays mostly consistent at 10 hours. Daytime sleep varies by age.

| Age | Daytime sleep | Nighttime sleep | Total sleep |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Newborn to 3 months | 8 hours | 10 hours | 18 hours |
| 6 months to 1 year | 5 hours | 10 hours | 15 hours |
| 2 years | 4 hours | 10 hours | 14 hours |
| 3 years | 1 hour | 10 hours | 11 hours |

"Usually, the need for naptime decreases when kids reach 4 to 6 years old," Dr. Garcia says. "At that point, they only need to sleep the 10 hours at night."

When and how long

Dr. Garcia says naps for kids should be 30 minutes to two hours. So, you can do some math. For example: your 2-year-old needs four hours of daytime sleep with naps no greater than two hours. So, aim for some two-hour slumbering mid to late morning and early afternoon.

"It's not recommended to nap after 3 or 4 p.m. to avoid causing disruptions at bedtime," Dr. Garcia warns. "We want to allow at least four hours between last nap and bedtime to avoid the kids being too tired at bedtime."

Bad nighttime sleep leads to irritability and poor concentration the next day, he adds.

No more naps

Dr. Garcia suggests parents look for signs that their child is ready to stop napping.

"Is the kid refusing or having a hard time taking a nap? If they do take a nap, do they have a problem falling asleep at night?" Dr. Garcia asks.

You should also talk to your child's school or day care. If they have daily nap time, let that continue until the child ages out of the facility. If the facility is flexible, inform them of your child's sleep habits and come up with a plan.

When the time comes to stop naps, Dr. Garcia recommends a clean break. There will likely be some fussiness, but it will subside. Moving bedtime up by 20 to 30 minutes can help.

Sleep tips

Some general good sleep tips:

- Make your home's lighting natural: bright during the day, darker as night approaches and dark at night.
- Make the bed the place to sleep. Do other activities like looking at screens in another room, and don't look at screens right before bedtime.
- Get into a routine by going to sleep and waking up at around the same time each day. And make the sleep and wake times normal. Waking up mid-morning each day, while a routine, isn't the best idea.
- Avoid large meals and caffeine before bed.
- If you are a light sleeper, use an artificial noise machine.

Learn more

Read more about [how to get good sleep](#) on the OSF HealthCare website.