

Australian Centre of Education in Sleep

Toddlers, Preschool and Junior School Children

Follow this link to hear Dr Sarah Blunden talk about toddler sleep for Parenting SA.-

<https://parenting.sa.gov.au/easy-guides/sleep-and-toddlers-sarah-blunden>

Many problems in this age group stem from a child's struggles between a need to develop independence and the need to be close to those they love. Common sleep disturbance in this age group include:

- Inability or unwillingness to fall sleep or stay asleep alone
- Bedtime fears, bedtime refusal
- Chronic and persistent nighttime waking
- Sleep walking, sleep talking and nightmares

There are quite a few things that contribute to these sleep problems.

Poor sleep habits or poor sleep "hygiene". This includes things like irregular bed and wake times or too much television before bed. (See list on [Sleep Facts](#) page)

- Parent's being inconsistent or unable to follow through on bedtime rules or routines or in the middle of the night.
- The child associates something which stops them from being able to get to sleep alone. Sometimes a parent will stay or sleep with a child until they fall asleep or the child will sleep in the parental bed.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Teach young children how to put themselves back to sleep alone. Withdraw your presence from their sleep environment slowly but surely.
- Regulate bed and wake times. Set limits at bedtime.
- Be aware of the signs of fatigue in this age group during the day (hyperactivity, acting out, irritability).
- Have a soothing and gentle routine before bed. Negotiate the routine with your child and make a deal.

For example:

- "We can ??? (e.g. read two books) if you want, but then you have to do ??? (e.g. go to bed now) "
- "Would you like to do ??, then you have to do ???"

Free downloads:

- [Sleep diary – younger children](#)
- [Wake up sleep test](#)
- [Garfield sleep focussed word jumble activity](#)



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Please also visit www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au for more information.