

Sleep

Find practical tips and advice to help your child develop healthy sleep habits, understand their changing sleep needs and support better sleep for the whole family.

Who is this page for?

- **Expectant parents**

Need information about newborn sleep, what to expect in the early weeks, and how to establish healthy sleep habits from the start.

- **Parents and carers of babies and young children**

Need practical advice on sleep routines, age-appropriate sleep patterns, managing common sleep challenges and supporting healthy sleep.

- **Families experiencing sleep difficulties**

Need reassurance that sleep challenges are common, along with tips, resources and information on where to seek additional support.

- **Parents concerned about their child's wellbeing or development**

Need information about the importance of sleep for growth, learning, behaviour and emotional wellbeing.

- **Health and social care professionals**

Need access to consistent information and resources to help support discussions with families about sleep and healthy routines.

- **Early years practitioners and childcare providers**

Need information about children's sleep needs and the role of good sleep in supporting development, wellbeing and learning.

What sleep should I expect?

Sleep patterns change as children grow. Newborn babies wake often for feeding and comfort, while older babies and children gradually develop more regular sleep routines.

Every child is different, and it may take time for healthy sleep habits to develop.

How can I help my child sleep well?

A consistent routine can help children feel settled and ready for sleep.

You can help by:

- Keeping regular bedtimes and wake-up times
- Following a calming bedtime routine
- Providing a comfortable sleep environment
- Encouraging active play during the day
- Limiting screens before bedtime

How can I keep my baby safe while sleeping?

Creating a safe sleep environment helps reduce the risk of sudden infant death and other sleep-related dangers.

Always:

- Place your baby on their back to sleep
- Use a firm, flat sleep surface
- Keep your baby's sleep space clear of pillows, toys and loose bedding
- Share a room with your baby for the first six months
- Keep your baby smoke-free before and after birth

Visit our **Safe Sleep** page for more information.

What if my child is not sleeping well?

Sleep difficulties are common and can affect children of all ages. Difficulties settling, night waking and changes in routine are often part of normal development.

If sleep problems are affecting your child or family life, speak to your Health Visitor or GP for advice and support.

Why is sleep important?

Good sleep supports your child's:

- Growth and development

- Learning and concentration
- Emotional wellbeing
- Physical health and wellbeing

Helping your child get enough sleep can support them to be happy, healthy and ready to learn.



Birth to five

This book provides information on caring for children up to five years old and contact details for useful organisations. It is available to new parents resident in Northern Ireland through primary care services (antenatal clinics, GPs or health visitors).



Safer sleeping - Reducing the risk of sudden infant death

This leaflet and poster provide information on the risks of sudden infant death. The leaflet has also been updated to highlight the risk of co-sleeping.



Promoting safer sleeping for infants and reducing the risk of sudden infant death: guidance for professionals

This guidance includes current evidence-based advice that should be discussed with parents/carers when addressing safer sleeping. It aims to provide health practitioners with information that promotes standardised practice.

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Useful contacts

- Your Health Visitor – Contact your local Health Centre or GP Practice for details of your named Health Visitor. Available during local office hours.
- Your GP Practice – Contact your GP if you have concerns about your child's sleep or wellbeing. Available during practice opening hours.
- Lifeline – 0808 808 8000 – Crisis response helpline for people experiencing distress or despair. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

HSC professionals

- Safe Sleep Guidance and Resources (PHA)
- Healthy Child, Healthy Future Programme (PHA)
- Health Visiting Service Guidance and Resources (PHA)
- Sudden Infant Death Prevention Information (PHA)
- Safeguarding Children and Young People (HSC/PHA)

Related content

- [Child development and additional needs](#)
- [Child mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [Health visiting](#)