



Dropping Naps



DROPPING NAPS

Dropping Naps:

If you've ever found yourself fighting with a strong-willed toddler over whether or not they will take a nap, you will understand that the struggle is real, they are very proficient at tricking us, they're not tired, and don't need a nap.....

When these stages hit, having some sound guidelines will not only help preserve your sanity, but also your night sleep. Because a toddler who naps excessively will experience delayed onset of night sleep and have more fragmented sleep. The toddler who drops their nap prematurely is likely to become upset and clingy at bedtime, not eat well (help fussy eating) and start to wake earlier and earlier ... hello 5am!

Naps will remain a significant part of your toddler's daily sleep needs, don't dismiss them as an unnecessary luxury.

During your toddler's nap their emotions regulate, which is a huge part of their wellbeing in these challenging years. A big factor behind frequent tantrums is often tiredness.

Their immune system strengthens when they sleep, the skills they learn move from short term to long term memory, their little appetites regulate, and they grow.

Your toddler should be on 1 nap a day by 18 months. They will need this nap until between 2.5-3 years old. The final stage of dropping that nap altogether is quite different for every child, and not quite as predictable as babies dropping their naps.

One nap a day:

Your toddler only needs 1 nap a day at this age. If you are still offering 2 naps and are wanting 11-12 hours of night sleep, aim to drop to one nap around lunch time to support this night sleep.

If you want a later bed time due to work commitments and only want 9-10 hours of night sleep, you can stick with 2 longer naps for longer.

Some signs that your toddler is ready to drop their nap completely.

- While having a solid 1-2-hour nap, they have started to wake earlier in the morning and are over 2 years old.
- The 1-2-hour nap is starting to cause a delayed onset of evening sleep, your toddler is wide awake, happy and showing no signs of sleep until 9/10pm.
- They refuse their nap and happily, last all afternoon with no nap, do not lose the plot at dinner time, and settle easily.
- They don't fall asleep in the car in the late afternoon when they skip their nap.
- Your toddler has started to wake in the night, is wide awake and bursting with energy for an hour or two without you in the room.

If your toddler is showing a few of these signs and is over 2.5 years old, they probably need to drop their nap, or if its longer than 1 hour, have it trimmed back a bit.

If they are just 2 years old, and you feel they are starting to show some signs of needing less sleep I suggest you first start with a shorter nap before completely cutting the nap. Don't be afraid to reinstate a nap if you feel you dropped it prematurely, it might take some work but it is possible to get it back!

Smooth transitions, dropping the day nap

Once your toddler is ready to drop their day nap here are a few ideas to smooth the rocky road ahead for you. It is very common for this transition to take a month!

I believe this transition to no nap is the biggest of all the nap transitions!

Firstly you'll need to reduce it before you drop it. You can gradually reduce the lunch nap from 2 hours to 30 minutes between 2-3 years. (look for signs previously mentioned they are ready for less day sleep).

Once you get the nap to 30 minutes, you can't really reduce it much more.

Now we have options. If your toddler is coping ok with this nap, but bedtime is pushing late, you're pretty sure they're ready for no nap, but when you try to drop it completely by day 3 they are losing the plot.... The solution is to offer this nap every second day.

After a couple of weeks or a month or so, increase this to only offering the day every 3 days. This way we gradually prepare them to have all their sleep at night, and don't rush the transition.

Preparing to drop the nap



Consider installing quiet time instead of a nap, which might be reading books, drawing, colouring, puzzles, something less physical for an hour after lunch. This will give you both some much needed down time.

In the first few weeks following your toddler dropping their nap don't be surprised if they're ready for bed 30-minutes earlier than usual.

Bedtime moving in response to a nap being dropped is very normal as their bodies adjust to the new equilibrium of no nap and 12 hours of night sleep only. Allow a good wind down before bed, and follow their tired cues, don't push them to stay awake until 7pm if they are tired at 6.45pm.

Bedtime should move back to it's normal time within a couple of weeks.

The second option is to cold turkey drop the nap from 30/45 minutes to nothing, and no in-between day naps.

This might be what is needed if you accidentally delayed dropping the nap and now have a split night.

Common mistakes:

The most common mistakes I see when it comes to toddler sleep:

1. Moving to a big bed too soon, this results almost immediately in a nap strike and the flow on affect is huge. Most toddlers don't have the impulse control needed to stay in a big bed until close to 3 years old. This is especially difficult in the day when sleep drive is lower than at night.
2. Mistaking tears of temporary frustration with tears of disappear and thus over stimulating the toddler as we try to assist them to sleep. I get it; a toddler screaming and crying at nap time is next level compared to a 6-month-old, but they are just tired and frustrated, and they need us to be the calm parent who knows what is best. Calmly insist that it is sleep time and be assured they haven't forgotten how to fall asleep.

3. Assuming a nap strike at 12 months or 24 months means your toddler needs no nap. Naps are so important in these toddler years when frustration is one of your toddlers most common emotions to deal with. Look at all the signs and make an informed choice around when to drop those naps.

Day time napping issues, nap strikes can be more difficult to solve than night time sleep issues, this is due to the difference is the physiological drive to sleep between day and night.

At night this drive is huge, and it is not as big during the day.

You can see this on the circadian rhythm chart earlier on in your guide. Parents often call me confused as their toddler sleeps so well at night, they don't understand why they can't repeat this throughout the day.

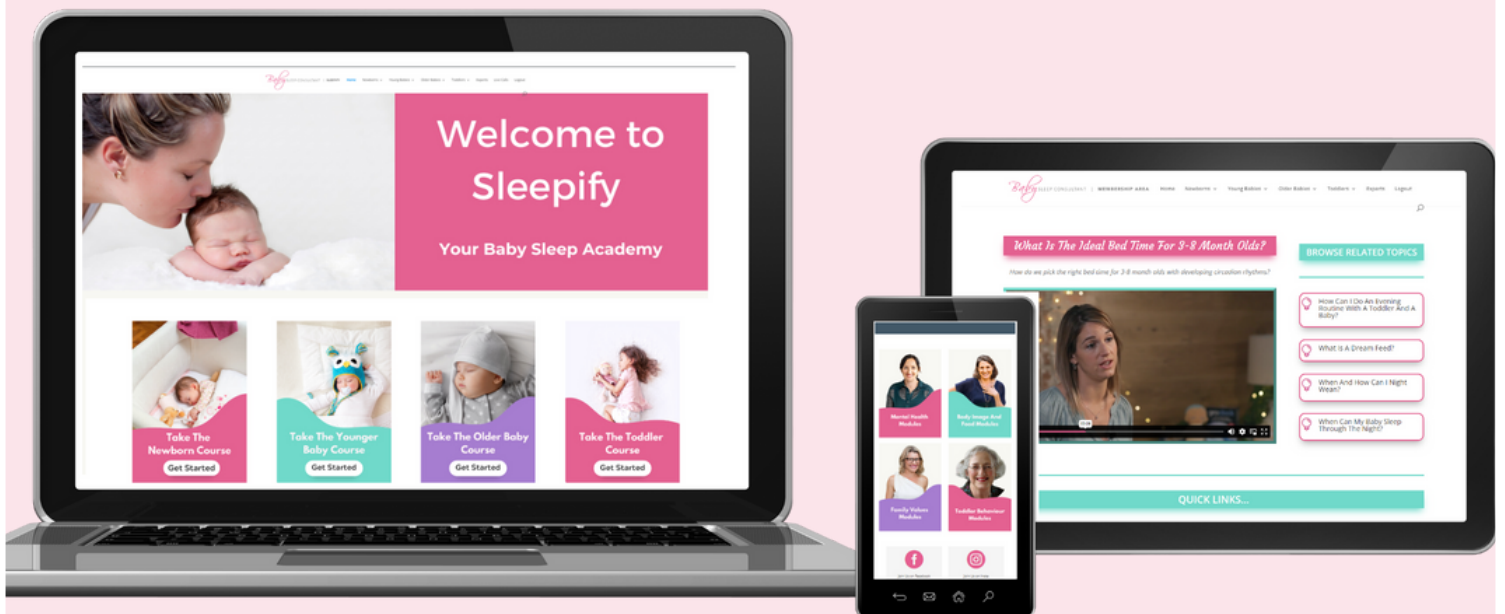
Understanding the difference in your toddler's physiological drive to sleep can help you to be patient with them as you establish a good nap routine and teach your toddler to settle, and re-settle into a second sleep cycle.

Despite sometimes being difficult to come by, day time naps are still important.

Baby Sleep Consultant

If you enjoyed this, you'll love **Sleepify!**
Our exclusive members-only portal,
PACKED with guides like this, video
modules for all ages and stages.
Case studies, expert content, and live Q
and A each fortnight.

Try it for \$1 >





Author

Emma Purdue is the owner and founder of Baby Sleep Consultant NZ and Australia, Happiest Baby on the Block educator, and Mother of 3. She has a Bachelor of Science and a Diploma in Education from the University of Auckland.

Her approaches in child sleep have led to developing an international training company, certifying and training sleep consultants worldwide. www.babysleepconsultanttraining.com

Emma's team of consultants has helped over 50,000 tired parents around the world; they understand sleep in all areas, as well as parental stress and the emotional challenge we face as parents when trying to improve our children's sleep.

It's not easy and you only want what's best for your child. The Baby Sleep Consultant Team have many free resources on our website in addition to this sleep guide www.babysleepconsultant.co

We have live sleep Q&A on our Instagram every Sunday <https://www.instagram.com/babysleepconsultant/> join us for one soon!

If you need some one on one assistance we offer phone, email and home consults, please get in touch admin@babysleepconsultant.co.nz



Emma Purdue

Emma is the owner and founder of Baby Sleep Consultant, she is a Certified Infant and Child Sleep Consultant, Lead Educator for Baby Sleep Consultant Training, Happiest Baby on the Block Educator, has a Bachelor of Science and Diploma in Education, she is a Gentle Sleep Expert and Mother of 3.