

Behavioral Management of Sleep Problems in Infants and Toddlers

(Problems with settling at bedtime and night waking)

The goals of intervention are: (1) To help your child learn how to soothe himself/herself and (2) how to put himself/herself to sleep without needing you, a soother, a bottle, etc. to do it for him/her.

Place child in crib when child is still awake.

1. Provide a structured bedtime routine in the child's bedroom. The bedtime routine:

- Could be to read a bedtime story
- Should not exceed 5 minutes
- Should not include nursing, drinking, feeding, etc. in the child's bedroom (so you help your child learn to no longer associate falling asleep with feeding if this has been a problem)
- Should not include rocking (so you help your child learn to no longer associate falling asleep with rocking and being held if this has been a problem)
- If you have never used a night light, there is no need to start using one. If you have been using one, then continue to use it.
- If you have been leaving your child's bedroom door closed at night, there is no need to start leaving it open. If you have been leaving your child's bedroom door open, then continue to leave it open (if your child sleeps in a crib and cannot get out of the crib). If you have been leaving your child's bedroom door open, and if your child sleeps in a bed (ie. not a crib), then you may have to warn the child that if he/she wants the door to stay open, then he/she has to stay in bed (this could become an incentive for the child to remain in bed).

2. Provide your child with a "transitional object":

- If your child has a favorite teddy bear or blanket or other object, place the object in your child's crib so he/she can use it as a "soother" if needed.
- If your child does not have a familiar object, place a few possible transitional objects your child can learn how to use to soothe himself or herself. Such potential transitional objects may include a small blanket, a teddy bear or other "huggable" stuffed animal, or even a piece of clothing that "smells" like mommy (eg. one of mommy's t-shirts). The "transitional object" is likely to become what the child uses to soothe himself/herself to sleep.

3. Sleep Program:

- After the bedtime routine is over and you have said good night to your child, leave the room. Then begin to time yourself. You will go into your child's bedroom at specified intervals (after 2 minutes, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes, and then every 30 minutes until child falls asleep) and remain in the room for a maximum of 15 seconds each time.
 - After 2 minutes (then 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 minutes), if your child is still crying:
 - Go into child's bedroom, put him/her back in the position he/she usually sleeps, gently rub your child's back/belly and say something reassuring to your child (eg. "daddy loves you but it's night-night") before leaving the room again. **DO NOT PICK UP** your child or rock him/her (remember you are trying to give your child the opportunity to find his/her own soothing method; your child is the only one who can find out what he/she can use to soothe himself/herself back to sleep. By not interfering with this process (but instead, by going into your child's bedroom at regular intervals to reassure him/her that you have not abandoned them), you allow your child to find his/her own way.
- DO NOT STAY IN CHILD'S BEDROOM FOR MORE THAN ≈15 SEC.**

Remember: if your child is ill, do not use the sleep program and attend to your child's needs. As soon as you know your child is "back to normal", then re-start the program. You may have to start from scratch but if you are consistent when using the program, your child should respond quickly.