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## **Nightmares**

## What are nightmares?

Nightmares are scary dreams that can wake a child leaving her upset and it are very common in children. It is rare to find someone who has never expenditer a nightmare, most children are afraid to go back to sleep and often do alone. Very young children do not know the difference between a dream an wake up they may not understand the concept that they were only dreamin They may keep insisting that something scary is still about to occur.

What do children have nightmares about? Most young toddlers have concer separated from their parents. So, they may have a nightmare about being I happen to one of their parents. Nightmares also are more likely to happen I event in the child's life. For example, if a child has just started day care or I away overnight, she is more likely to have a nightmare. For young children the re-living of a traumatic event, such as getting lost, getting a shot at the barked at by a big dog. By age two, nightmares begin to incorporate monst can hurt them. Older children often have nightmares related to scary movie daytime experience.

## What causes nightmares?

Nightmares are usually a part of normal development and are a sign of a you imagination. Children are also more likely to have nightmares after a fright

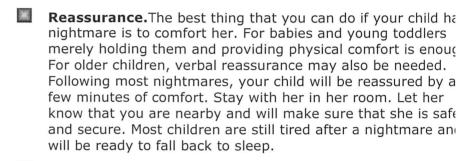
There are some things that you can do to help reduce the likelihood of nigh

- Avoid scary things before bedtime. Don't read scary stor or watch scary movies or television shows immediately befor bedtime. Choose instead a comforting bedtime routine.
- Stressors. If there is something in your child's life that you know is distressing, try to take care of it and reassure your child. If your child suddenly experiences a significant increas nightmares, try to evaluate why. Look for recurring themes to could give you a clue as to the cause and then deal with the problem.
- Ensure your child is getting enough sleep. Children are

much more likely to have nightmares after not getting enoug sleep. So, if your child is having nightmares, make sure that is getting enough sleep as this can help decrease the frequer and intensity of nightmares.

## How should you respond to your child's nightmares?

If your child has a nightmare, there are a few things that you should do:



- Security object. Helping a child become attached to a secu object that he can keep in bed with him can be beneficial. The often helps a child feel more relaxed throughout the night.
- Leave a light on. If your child insists on you putting a light and leaving it on, that is okay. If you leave it on, put it on th dimmest setting possible so your child can fall back to sleep.
- **Discuss it the next day.** The next day, you may want to trand talk to your child about her nightmare to see if there is anything bothering her. Most of the time, nightmares are isolated events with little meaning, but if your child starts having them on a frequent basis you will want to try and figuout what is disturbing your child.
- **Use of imagination.** Some children do well with using their imagination to get rid of nightmares. A child can draw pictur of their bad dreams and throw them away or they can imagin different endings to their nightmares. Even a dream catcher hung over a child's bed can be reassuring.
- **Get outside help.** If your child's nightmares are severe, meaning that they are interfering in your child's life or occur on a very frequent basis, speak to your child's physician or a mental health provider.