



Easy Steps to Better Sleep: 3 to 5 Year Old Toddler

WHAT IS SLEEP LIKE FOR YOUR CHILD AT THIS STAGE?

Good sleep is essential for every child as sleep has a significant impact on learning and behavioural development. Adequate sleep quantity and good sleep quality contribute to optimal brain function and the overall growth and health of your child. When your child sleeps well, it also reduces the disruptions to your family's sleep.

At this stage in life, your child would have started pre-school. The new routines may create changes in his/her sleep pattern. Thus, it is important that good sleep practices are reinforced to ensure optimal sleep.

SLEEP PATTERNS

- Children in this phase would sleep an average of 11.5 to 12 hours over a 24-hour period, with one daytime nap or none.¹

¹ Mindell, J. A., & Owens, J. A. (2015). *A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems*. Wolters Kluwer Health.

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES IN YOUR CHILD

- At this age, the growing imagination in your child can lead to night-time fears. The developing cognitive and language skills also increase his/her ability to express fears or wants.



SLEEP CHALLENGES

Bedtime Resistance/Prolonged Sleep Onset

Potential Causes

- Night-time fears: Your child may present with fearful behaviours (e.g. crying), demand caregiver attention at bedtime and partial or total ease of fears when sleeping in a room with another individual.

Management

- Establish and practise consistent bedtime rules which include reinforcing appropriate bedtime behaviours.
- Reassure your child that he/she is safe.
- If needed, allow your child to use the same transitional object (e.g., soft toy) at bedtime.
- Use a night light in your child's bedroom if necessary.
- Keep your child's bedroom door ajar.
- Check on your child briefly and regularly after putting him/her to bed. This is to reassure your child while still maintaining bedtime limits.
- Use positive reinforcement to reward your child's good bedtime behaviour.
- Avoid exposing your child to scary images, especially prior to bedtime.



Night Wakings

Potential Causes

- Night-time fears
- Nightmares: Your child wakes up terrified but coherent and can recall the frightening experience.
- Confusional arousal: Your child is abruptly awakened from sleep, leading to disorientation and/or agitation. Your child would usually be unable to recall the event later.
- Sleepwalking: Your child appears to be awake and walks around doing daily activities but is actually still asleep.
- Sleep/night terror: This can present with dramatic fearful behaviours (e.g., extreme agitation, confusion), typically in the earlier part of the night. Your child is usually unaware of their behaviour and would not be able to recall the event later.
- Obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA): Your child may also present with regular snoring most nights and pauses in breathing while sleeping. It can be accompanied by gasping, snorting and choking episodes. He/she may have see-saw movements of the chest and abdomen when breathing, restlessness in bed and an unusual sleeping position (e.g., hyperextended neck).

Management

- Implement a sleep schedule with a consistent bedtime to ensure sufficient sleep for your child.
- Reassure your child that it was only a dream if he/she wakes up from a nightmare.
- When attending to your child who has awakened from his/her nightmares, keep your child in his/her bed to avoid reinforcing your child's fear of going to bed.
- If needed, allow your child to use a night light or the same transitional object (e.g., soft toy, blanket) at bedtime.
- Avoid exposing your child to scary images, especially prior to bedtime.
- Put in place safety measures (e.g., locking doors, windows and grills).
- Install measures that would alert you to your child's movements.
- During a sleepwalking episode, gently guide your child back to bed and avoid waking them.
- Inform other caregivers of your child's sleepwalking or sleep/night terror when your child is sleeping away from home (e.g., sleepovers, school camps).
- Contact your doctor if you suspect your child has OSA as he/she may require a formal assessment (e.g., sleep study).
- Avoid exposing your child to pollutants (e.g., cigarette smoke) which may worsen OSA.



About the National University Centre for Women and Children

National University Centre for Women and Children (NUWoC) is a national university specialist centre that aims to empower women, children and their families to lead healthier lives. We provide comprehensive medical and surgical services ranging from pre-conception to child and maternal health.

NUWoC comprises the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G) and Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute (KTP-NUCMI) of National University Hospital. It focuses on the right-siting of appropriate services in the community and builds complementary services in National University Health System's (NUHS) centres of excellence – Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Alexandra Hospital.

Through a generous gift from the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat, KTP-NUCMI established an integrated outpatient facility with medical, diagnostic and rehabilitation services for children. We are also the only public specialist centre in Singapore that offers paediatric kidney and liver transplant programmes.

For more information about us, visit www.nuh.com.sg/NUWoC

Children's Emergency (24-hr)

Location NUH Main Building, Zone F, Level 1
Contact +65 6772 5000

KTP-NUCMI

Location NUH Main Building, Zone E, Level 2
(Accessible via Kent Ridge Wing, Zone C, Level 2, Lift Lobby C)
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri), 8.30am – 12.30pm (Sat)
General Enquiry +65 6772 5736
Appointment Line +65 6908 2222
Email ktpnucmi_appt@nuhs.edu.sg

9a Viva-University Children's Cancer Centre

Location NUH Medical Centre, Zone B, Level 9
Operating Hours 8am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6772 5030
Email cbccappt@nuhs.edu.sg

NUH Children's Urgent Care Clinic @ Bukit Panjang

Location Junction 10, #01-22
Operating Hours 9am – 11pm daily (including public holidays)
General Enquiry +65 6219 1538
Email childreucc@nuhs.edu.sg

NUH Child Development Unit @ JMC

Location Jurong Medical Centre, Level 2
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6665 2530 / 2531
Email cdu@nuhs.edu.sg

NUH Child Development Unit @ Keat Hong

Location Keat Hong Community Club, #03-01
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6769 4537/4637
Email cdu@nuhs.edu.sg

Clinic A22 NUWoC Children's Clinic @ NTFGH

Location Ng Teng Fong General Hospital
Tower A – NTFGH Clinics, Level 2
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6908 2222
Email appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Our Patient Care Institutions

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Ng Teng Fong General Hospital &
Jurong Community Hospital
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National University Polyclinics
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