
**Sleep is a dynamic activity.**
The five stages of sleep progress in a cycle from **stage 1** to REM sleep, then the cycle starts over.

### What are the stages?

- **Stage 1:** Deep slow-wave sleep (delta waves) and faster, smaller ones appear during this stage.
- **Stage 2:** Mostly made up of slow brain waves (delta waves). The entire body is deeply relaxed. This is the hardest stage from which to wake.
- **Stage 3:** High slow-wave sleep (theta waves) and faster, smaller ones appear during this stage.
- **Stage 4:** Mostly made up of slow brain waves (delta waves). The entire body is deeply relaxed. This is the hardest stage from which to wake.

REM sleep is known for its rapid, regular breathing, constant eye movement and temporary paralysis of muscles. There is an increase in blood pressure and heart rate.

REM sleep is found in all stages of sleep. REM sleep lasts longer during evening naps than those in the afternoon.

**What are dreams?**

Infant REM sleep was first studied in 1952. However, scientists still do not fully understand the need for and purpose of dreams. Hyperactivity believed that dreams are part of a human's unconscious desires.

- REM sleep begins at night, during naps. REM may begin during evening naps than those in the afternoon.
- Deep sleep becomes normalized during deep sleep. Cycles also increase in reproduction and protein breakdown decreases during these two stages.

**Deep sleep** increases the amount of REM sleep. Cycles also increase in reproduction and protein breakdown decreases during these two stages.

**REM sleep** stimulates the cerebral cortex, which helps the brain develop learning ability. Scientists believe that why infants spend 50% of their time in REM sleep.

**What is the best way to help your child develop good sleep habits?** There are many expert views about what role parents should play when it comes to helping their children develop good sleep habits. Ultimately, the choice is yours. If you like an approach that:

1. **is lenient** about responding to your baby when he cries during the night and emphasizes consistent bedtime routines and positive sleep associations, check out Dr. Jodi Mindell’s book, Sleeping Through the Night: How Infants, Toddlers and Their Parents Can Get a Good Night’s Sleep.
2. **advocates sticking firmly to routine** and letting your child cry at bedtime for extended intervals of time before you provide her with comfort, read Dr. Richard Ferber’s book, Solve Your Child’s Sleep Problems.
3. **focuses on training your baby to go to sleep and comfort himself** on his own by keeping nighttime feelings short, synchronizing soothing techniques with his daytime naps last more than a few hours and using your voice or a gentle pat to comfort him when he cries, try the American Academy of Pediatrics’ book, Guide to Your Child’s Sleep.
4. **promotes the family bed** and other ways of being there for your child to provide a comforting, relaxing sleep environment, look at Dr. William Sears’ book, Nighttime Parenting.
5. **emphasizes the prevention of sleep problems** and teaches healthy sleep habits by synchronizing soothing techniques with your child’s natural rhythms, read Dr. Marc Weissbluth’s book, Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child.

**The brain is always active.**
Since the 1950s, we’ve learned that our brains are very active during sleep. Neurotransmitters, or nerve-signaling chemicals in our brains, control whether we are asleep or awake. Neurons, which connect the brain to the spinal cord, produce other neurotransmitters which keep some parts of the brain active during sleep and while awake.

Recent studies suggest that behavioral problems in children 2-3 years of age may occur if they sleep less than 11 hours at night. Children this age should sleep up to 13 hours at night.

Lack of sleep can cause behavioral problems such as acting out, behaving aggressively and hyperactivity. Conversely, children’s behavioral problems have been said to contribute to a lack of sleep in children.

Different children need various amounts of sleep. If a child does not look well rested, he probably needs more sleep.

Waking up at night, a problem that occurs in 33% of children 2-4 years old, can also cause behavioral problems.

Researchers believe that regular amounts of sleep deprivation may have long-term effects on brain function.

Studies on rats show that sleep is necessary for survival, demonstrating that life expectancy decreases with sleep deprivation.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**The ABCs of catching ZZZZZs**

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