



**APPRENDRE  
À DORMIR**

# When to stop napping and not disrupt nighttime sleep?

**Popular science communication:** Geneviève Forest Ph.D., Rachel Pétrin Ph.D. candidate, Catherine Lord, Ph.D. and Julie Andrews, Ph.D.

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## Is napping still essential after a certain age? When can one confidently stop?

Despite the recent surge in research on children's sleep and the growing awareness of the importance of sleep for health, research on the specific impact of napping is still in its early stages.

**For now, research tends to indicate that napping does not have a crucial impact on a child's development past a certain age. Nighttime sleep appears to be more important. When the time comes, the transition can thus be made more peacefully to prevent naps from disrupting nighttime sleep.**

However, we do know that children between the ages of 3 and 5 [need](#) 10 to 13 hours of sleep per day (including naps and nighttime sleep). Around the age of 3, there is a transition to consolidated nighttime sleep. At this age, they require less daytime sleep and primarily sleep at night. The way this transition is experienced [varies from one child to another](#). Staying attentive to [signs of lack of sleep](#) and how bedtime routines unfold in the evening helps determine when this transition begins and allows for adjustments to accommodate the evolving needs of the child.

## When napping disrupts nighttime sleep?

Certain signs indicate that a child is ready to reduce or stop taking naps. For instance, **if your child takes more than 30 minutes to fall asleep at night at their usual bedtime or wakes up more frequently during the night**, it may be time to consider transitioning away from naps. Additionally, a child may sometimes exhibit signs of not being tired at their usual bedtime, such as requesting a later bedtime, asking for more cuddles, more stories, or more of your presence. These behaviors that resemble bedtime difficulties may be related to their daytime nap duration. Due to the nap, they may not feel tired at the usual bedtime... much like how we do when we take a nap. A nap is likely to affect our bedtime, causing us to go to bed later. Naps can thus delay the first [sleep train](#). **Yes, your baby is starting to have a “big kid” sleep schedule.**

Remember that this transition is not an “all or nothing” process for most children. The needs may vary from day to day for a certain period (which can vary based on the child’s developmental pace). Staying attentive to [signs of fatigue](#) allows you to adapt to the child’s needs and **respect their transition without disrupting their nighttime sleep.**

**It’s better to sleep well at night than to take daytime naps.**

**This is a reality that applies to all ages, even after the early childhood years have passed.** It’s important to keep in mind that even if a child manages to fall asleep during the day, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s the optimal developmental solution in the long term.

## So, what do we do?

It's essential to remain attentive to the child's [sleep needs](#), adapt to their changes, and be flexible in providing them with the **opportunities for sleep** they require. **During this transition, if it is possible to make choices about taking a nap or not, it appears wiser to prioritize nighttime sleep.** Nighttime sleep plays a more significant role than daytime sleep in a child's development.

Therefore, **a dialogue within the “village” that surrounds the child is necessary.**

Adjustments can be discussed among parents, within the extended family if grandparents are involved in afternoon care, for example, and with the childcare provider. This dialogue should take into account the child's 24-hour sleep needs during the transition. We hope that this exchange will lead to [finding solutions together that are realistic for everyone](#) while, as much as possible, keeping the child's needs at the forefront of decisions related to adjustments in their sleep schedule.

Listen to [Geneviève Forest, Ph.D.](#) and her student [Rachel Pétrin, Ph. D. candidate](#) talk about this transition to nighttime sleep.

Watch «**When to stop napping and not disrupt nighttime sleep?**» to learn more.

## Inspiration and scientific sources:

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