APPRENDRE À DORMIR

Did my child sleep today? How can we manage the transition together when naps are no longer needed?



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My child seems to need naps less and less, what should I expect during this transition?

During the first 5 years of life, a child's sleep needs evolve from multiple naps a day to just one nap a day, and eventually to no naps. Your « baby » now has the sleep pattern of a « big kid.»



cally begins around the age of 3 for most children. It is associated with the child's development, meaning that **as they grow, they become less tired during the day, and their nighttime sleep becomes more restorative.**

This transition is complex to describe in detail because **there is no fixed pattern or precise duration**; it varies from child to child. Although there may be some general patterns, research on this transition stage is still limited, making it challenging to provide very specific guidelines to parents.

Every child is unique, which means it's essential to adapt to your child's sleep needs. For instance, if you're wondering whether it's time to stop naps, you can observe their signs of fatigue or non-fatigue and adjust their daytime and nighttime sleep times to support them in the transition while respecting their sleep needs.

Adapting can indeed be challenging at times!

At home, it's easier for a parent to be attentive to their child and adapt to their individual needs. In a childcare setting, the communal nature of life can make personal adjustments more complex. In our increasingly inclusive and equitable societies, respecting children's sleep needs deserves our attention.

As an example, in Quebec (Canada), in childcare settings, naps are often mandatory until the age of 5 and stop when children start school at around 5-6 years old. Consequently, many children in communal settings continue to nap even though the majority of them no longer need it, which could come as early as 2-3 years of age. For these children, napping can disrupt their nighttime sleep and may lead to challenging bedtime moments at home in the evening.

You can refer to the text **«When to stop napping and not disrupt nighttime sleep »** to learn more about the connection between daytime and nighttime sleep during the transition and the respective importance of daytime and nighttime sleep.

By keeping an eye on signs of fatigue or non-fatigue during the day and evening, and maintaining an open dialogue with the individuals responsible for the child's afternoon nap, solutions will emerge. The key is to have discussions to find realistic solutions that, as much as possible, prioritize the child's needs at the core of decisions related to adjustments in their sleep hours.

If you believe that daytime sleep is having a negative impact on your child's nighttime sleep, **here are two realistic suggestions from sleep** researchers Geneviève Forest and Rachel Pétrin:

1. If possible, encourage the child to engage in a **quiet activity during the designated nap time**, such as reading or coloring, instead of lying down and falling asleep (because yes, sleep may come, but it doesn't necessarily mean they need it).
2. As much as possible, to shorten the nap time, **request that your child be put down for a nap last and be the first one to be woken up.**

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

Watch «**Did my child sleep today? How can we manage the transition together when naps are no longer needed?**» to learn more.

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