

## DAY ROUTINES (Module 4)

### *Lesson 2: Creating a bedtime ritual*

Having a consistent sleep ritual before all naps and bedtime is helpful in many ways. It helps your little one wind down and relax, encouraging self-settling and sets the stage for consolidated sleep. Here are some important key features about bedtime rituals to keep in mind:

- 1) Keep the ritual predictable, and try to do the same things in the same order every time. A consistent sleep ritual helps to send a signal to the brain that it's sleep time, making it easier for your child to fall asleep.
- 2) A nap ritual can be short, e.g. 5-10 minutes, while the bedtime ritual in the evening should be 15-30 minutes long. The naptime ritual should be similar to the bedtime ritual, however.
- 3) Start the ritual early, not right at the time when your child is supposed to be falling asleep. There's nothing worse than realizing that your bedtime ritual has just pushed your little one into overtiredness and a second wind of energy!
- 4) If your child still feeds before a nap or bedtime, make sure you nurse or feed them 20-30 minutes before bedtime, as nursing too close to sleep-time is often a hidden sleep association, and can lead to short naps and frequent night waking (more on sleep associations in Module 7).
- 5) Make your child's bedtime ritual age-appropriate. Here are some different ideas for different ages:

### **Example: 4-9 months**

- ★ Bathtime (optional)
- ★ Milk feed (make sure you finish the feed at least 20 minutes before bedtime)
- ★ Wash face and change diaper
- ★ Put pajamas on

*(If your baby had a bath, the diaper change and pajama steps would be straight after the bath, followed by the milk-feed. Here it would be important to create a pause after the milk-feed before bed with a short play-time on the ground or looking at a picture book with parents).*

- ★ Dim lights and put sleeping bag on / swaddle, turn sound machine on
- ★ Cuddle time (2-5 minutes) - hold baby, sway around the room or rock in a chair and sing a lullaby. (**NOTE** - \*\*Be sure NOT to let your baby fall asleep during the cuddle session! There is nothing worse than a baby getting a short power-nap in mom's arms and then trying to settle them back to sleep in their crib afterwards!)
- ★ Lights out and baby into bed

### **Example: 9-18 months**

- ★ Bathtime (optional)
- ★ Milk feed (make sure you finish the feed at least 20 minutes before bedtime)
- ★ Wash up and change diaper
- ★ Put pajamas on

*(If your child had a bath, the diaper change and pajama steps would be straight after the bath, followed by the milk-feed.)*

- ★ Calm play-time: reading a story (or two!), putting stuffed animals to bed, singing some bedtime songs, etc.
- ★ Dim lights and put sleeping bag on, turn sound machine on
- ★ Cuddle time (2-5 minutes) - hold your child, sway around the room or rock

in a chair and sing a lullaby. (**NOTE** - \*\*Be sure not to let your little one fall asleep during the cuddle session! There is nothing worse than a child getting a short power-nap in mom's arms and then trying to settle them back to sleep in their crib afterwards!)

- ★ Lights out and child into bed

***Example: 18-24 months***

- ★ Bathtime or wash up (optional)
- ★ Change diaper or go to the potty
- ★ Put pajamas on
- ★ Dim lights
- ★ Wind-down while reading a story (or two!), putting stuffed animals to bed
- ★ Cuddle time (2-5 minutes) - Singing some bedtime songs, etc. (**NOTE** - \*\*Be sure not to let your little one fall asleep during the cuddle session! There is nothing worse than a child getting a short power-nap in mom's arms and then trying to settle them back to sleep in their crib afterwards!)
- ★ Sleeping bag on, child into bed, lights out

Go to your worksheets now and answer the questions for **Module 4, Lesson 2 - Creating a Bedtime Ritual.**