

SESSION 7

Understanding your child's behaviour Why do some children not sleep well?

7.23

This is a common problem for families, so common in fact that it is normal for a child to have some sort of sleep disturbance in their lives. The research shows that at nine months old, 22% of babies are difficult to settle and 42% wake often at night. Altogether, about a third of pre-school children have some sort of difficulty in sleeping.

Some children find it hard to fall asleep and may sometimes take two to three hours to settle. Other children wake up or cry in the night. Some wake up only once but for a long time, sometimes for hours! Others go visiting in the night, to their parents or a brother or sister. Some children will only sleep in their parents' bed.

Babies and children wake in the night for several reasons:

- Any changes in family life
- If a mother is out at work for long hours, they and their babies may need time together in the evening or at night
- Parents may be too tired to go through a bedtime routine that is satisfying to the baby
- They may still be excited from events in the day
- They may be worried about being apart from their parents.

There are also many practical reasons why children do not sleep well: they are ill, excited, too hot, too cold, hungry or upset.

