



NIGHT WAKINGS: WHAT'S NORMAL?

Waking in the night is completely normal—for both children and adults. Sleep isn't one long, uninterrupted stretch. It happens in cycles, and we naturally come into lighter sleep or briefly wake at the end of each cycle.

Why Do Night Wakings Happen?

- Sleep cycles: We move through different stages of sleep in cycles (around 60–90 minutes). At the end of each cycle, the brain briefly “checks in,” which can lead to a short wake
- Normal brain activity: These brief wakings are part of healthy sleep, even if we don't always remember them
- Environment and habits: Light, noise, temperature, or needing certain conditions to fall asleep (like feeding, rocking, or a parent present) can make these wakings more noticeable



The Key Skill: Falling Back Asleep

- The goal is not to stop night wakings completely—it's to help your child (or yourself) return to sleep quickly and easily.
- When sleep is working well: You may briefly wake but drift back off within seconds or minutes
- There is little or no need for help or intervention
- When sleep is more challenging: Waking fully and struggling to settle again
- Needing the same support used at bedtime to fall back asleep

Why Some Children Struggle to Resettle

- They rely on specific conditions to fall asleep (e.g. feeding, rocking, someone in the room)
- Their environment changes when they wake (e.g. falling asleep in arms but waking in the cot)
- They haven't yet developed independent sleep skills





HOW TO SUPPORT BETTER RESETTLING

- Keep bedtime conditions consistent
- Try to have your child fall asleep in the same environment they will wake in
- Encourage independent sleep skills
- This helps them use the same skills when they wake in the night
- Keep responses calm and consistent
- Avoid introducing new habits overnight that aren't present at bedtime
- Support, don't overstimulate
- Keep interactions quiet, low light, and predictable

Night wakings are not the problem- they are part of normal sleep. The real goal is helping your child learn how to move between sleep cycles and settle back to sleep with ease.

