



## NIGHTMARES VS NIGHT TERROR

Many children experience nightmares or sleep terrors, but they are often misunderstood. They are different from each other and need different approaches. Understanding the difference is important, so use the table below to help identify what your child may be experiencing.



### NIGHTMARES:

Nightmares are very common, and most children will experience them at some point.

- They usually happen during dream sleep (REM sleep)
- They are more common in the second half of the night
- Children often wake fully and may remember what happened, even if only briefly
- It is possible to have more than one nightmare in a night
- Your child may wake suddenly, feel alert, and call out for comfort
- They are often able to recall the dream the next morning



### NIGHT TERRORS:

Sleep terrors are less common than nightmares and usually happen in the first half of the night.

- Your child is in a deep sleep and not dreaming, even though they may look awake
- They can start suddenly, with loud screaming or crying
- Your child may sit up, have their eyes open, or even get out of bed
- They are often confused, distressed, and hard to comfort
- Trying to intervene can sometimes make it worse
- Episodes usually pass quickly, and your child will not remember them the next day

It can be useful to keep a sleep diary if you are unsure, and show this to your GP if they are persistent and ongoing

