

## Behavioral Problems:

### Sleep onset association disorder:

My 7 month old has started waking up more frequently in the last several weeks after a cold. For the last several months, she has slept through the night with only a single awakening at night. However, she recently had a cold and started waking up every 1.5 -2 hours at night. Now the cold has resolved but she awakenings remain! She typically falls asleep at the breast every evening after her bedtime routine, which includes a bath, a story and some songs from her father before I nurse her. She awakens frequently the night and I nurse her back to sleep. These feedings are brief and I don't think she is getting very much milk. She has started wetting through her diapers, however. Her first awakening is about 2-3 hours but she awakens every 1 ½ hour for the rest of the night. She awakens in the morning around 7 AM and naps from 9-10 AM and 1-:2:30 PM. Lately these naps have been shorter as well.

### My prescription:

1. Pick a convenient date to start addressing this issue.
2. Try switching your bedtime routine so we can separate nursing/feeding from sleep onset. Thus, instead of bath → story → song → nursing → bed, change the order e.g. nursing → bath → story → song → bed.
3. Please place the baby in the crib drowsy but awake.
4. See if your child benefits from checking. Do checks calm your child or upset them? If you decide to check, check every 5 minutes. Checks should be brief and without contact. "I love you, you're fine, good night".
5. As for the night time awakenings, they will extinguish on their own. Frequent feeding will reinforce them. For this family with a child at the 90% for weight, I recommended Dad offering a 2 oz bottle of water at night.

### Bedtime resistance:

<http://bit.ly/PzmnY7>

Our 29 month old son usually would fall asleep about 20 minutes after lying down in his crib. Now, he is often falling asleep 1.5-2 hours after the desired bedtime of 8pm. He has found various and sundry ways to delay going to sleep. He would like a drink of water. He needs his blanket fixed. He wants to rock. He has a story to tell or a song to sing. Many of these are actually very endearing, but nonetheless I worry about him not getting enough sleep and admittedly become a little frustrated. On a particularly trying night, I made the mistake of bringing him into our bed to see if he would fall asleep. Fall asleep he did, but he now refuses to go to sleep any other way. Of course.

### My prescription:

- 1.** You need to pick a convenient date to address this issue, preferably when you don't have a big work presentation, vacation, or grandparent visit planned in the next week or so. If a vacation is imminent I usually recommend deferring this to after returning from your trip.
- 2.** Prior to starting spend some time playing with your son in his room, especially in his crib or bed. Frequently kids become averse to the sleep environment. Make it fun again.
- 3.** Bedtime in this context should be brief (30 minutes), predictable, and goal directed e.g. don't make multiple trips downstairs if the bedroom is upstairs.
- 4.** Two major reasons that parents fail are inconsistency, and failing to push through an extinction burst, which is a brief escalation in sleep difficulties during training.
- 5.** An important part of minimizing fussing with training is bedtime fading. This means moving your son's bedtime later than is typical for a few days to increase sleep drive at bedtime. If your desired bedtime is 8 PM, 9 is okay, but may need to be later if he consistently falling asleep later. The keys to successful bedtime fading include not letting your child sleep later than usual in the morning, and avoiding sneaky sleep in the late afternoon either in the car, stroller or other venue. Once your child is falling asleep within 15-30 minutes you can move this earlier by 15 minutes a day to the desired bedtime.
- 6.** I would absolutely avoid taking him into your bed as doing so drastically worsened your issues.
- 7.** Now here is the hard part. Your son needs to relearn falling asleep on his own, in his room. You could either go straight to an extinction approach (at the later bedtime, expecting him to fall asleep on his own and ignoring his cries) or a more gradual process (having him fall asleep with you in the room nearby x 1-2 nights, then by the door for 1-2 nights, then outside the door for 1-2 nights). Unfortunately, given his age, you are likely to have some tears either way, so I as a parent have generally chosen the shorter approach.
- 8.** In a 29 month old, rewards e.g. via a sticker chart, may be helpful.
- 9.** Avoid working on sleep if you are working on another major milestone such as potty training.
- 10.** Stay the course. Once you start the process, see it through. Otherwise any tears (yours or your son's) will have been in vain, and you will have to do it all again later.