Tired signs in babies and children

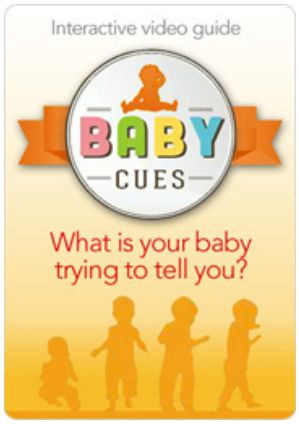


Young children get overtired easily. When they do, they find it harder to get to sleep. Once you can spot those telltale signs of tiredness, you'll be able to settle your child to sleep before grumpiness sets in.

You can read this article in a selection of languages other than English.

Tired signs: why they're important

Children show they're tired through changes in behaviour. For example, your child might be suddenly irritable, overactive or demanding.



It's important to **look for your child's 'tired signs'**. This can help you reduce stimulation and start settling your child before overtiredness sets in.

Newborns: tired signs

Newborn babies will probably get overtired if they've been awake for more than 1-1½ hours. At 3-6 months, your baby will be overtired after 1½-3 hours awake.

If your newborn is tired, you might see some of the following tired signs:

- pulling at ears
- closing fists
- fluttering eyelids
- jerky arm and leg movements
- yawning
- a worried look on your child's face
- arching backwards
- difficulty focusing – your baby might even go cross-eyed or seem to be staring into space
- sucking on fingers – this could be a good sign and might mean that your baby is trying to find ways to settle to sleep.

Babies and toddlers: tired signs

At 6-12 months, your baby will be overtired after 2-3 hours awake. At 12-18 months, your baby will be overtired if he misses out on his morning or afternoon sleep.

If your baby or toddler is tired, you might see some of the following tired signs:

- clumsiness
- clinginess
- grizzling
- crying
- demands for constant attention
- boredom with toys
- fussiness with food.

Grizzling and crying can mean your child is absolutely exhausted, but it's often hard to tell the difference between tired grizzling and hungry grizzling.

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Reducing stimulation

If your child is showing signs of tiredness, you can reduce stimulation by:

- taking your child to the place where she usually sleeps
- putting toys away
- talking quietly and soothingly
- closing curtains and blinds
- turning overhead lights off – use lamps if you need to
- playing music quietly – this will help cut down on background noise.

Making quiet time

Some quiet time before bed will help your child settle to sleep:

- Give your child some quiet time in the place where he usually sleeps.
- Calm your child with a gentle cuddle or by reading a story or singing a quiet song.
- Your child might need only a few minutes of quiet time before she's relaxed and ready to be put in bed. If your household is noisy and active, your child might need some extra quiet time before it's time for sleep.

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- Simplified Chinese (PDF: 166kb)
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