



Things That Help Babies Wind Down

Parents and babies are coming to the end of an active day. Everyone may be ready to settle down. This is a time when routines can be especially important for your baby. The nighttime routine you create for your baby will provide comfort and security.

Routines help your baby and growing child understand how you expect them to behave. Knowing that firm but caring limits are in place helps children feel secure. It also makes them feel that they can behave as you expect them to.

You can change routines as your child grows and develops, or as your needs change. You may choose to get rid of some parts of a routine, but to add new ideas as you need or want. Other things that may help a child to wind down include:

- Calm surroundings with someone who speaks and acts slowly (like Mr. Rogers!)
- Quiet play in a familiar space with only a few toys (others are put away)
- Low lighting
- Talking softly
- Singing softly or playing soothing, soft music
- Using an infant swing
- Rocking
- A bath
 - Have everything ready before you put your baby in the water: run the water; check the temperature; gather soap, shampoo, towel, clean clothing, diaper, and toys.
 - This can be a time for quiet play with safe water toys
 - You can talk to your baby as you wash him.
 - You may sing the same 'bath' song each evening.
 - Wrap your baby in a warm towel and gently dry him. This can be nurturing and quieting.
 - Dress your child in clean clothes. This can help her feel comfortable and ready for bed.
- At Bedtime:
 - Moving your baby from bed to bed or from room to room may disturb her sleep. Babies can wake up completely if they realize they are not in the place where they fell asleep.
 - Your baby may have a favorite position for falling asleep, on either his back or side.
 - Try to play soft music.
 - This is a nice time to read or tell a short story together.

- A favorite object such as a stuffed toy or blanket can comfort a child.
- A kiss and a hug always reassure a child.
- You may decide to have all the lights out or very low lighting such as a night-light.
- You may decide to close the door, leave it open a bit, or leave it open all the way.
- Rocking or nursing your baby to sleep can be effective, at first. But it can also create difficulties for both of you. Everyone has periods of deep sleep and light sleep. If your baby wakes up during a period of light sleep, she may expect to be rocked or nursed back to sleep; this may happen no matter what time it is!