



There is a pattern to your child's day. They wake up, go to the toilet or have their diaper changed. They get dressed, eat breakfast, play at home or go to a child care centre where they have a schedule. When they come home, they have dinner, a bath, brush their teeth, have reading or snuggling time and go to bed. Put together, these repeated tasks make a routine that can help your child to feel relaxed and secure.

Why are routines important?

- Children feel secure and comfortable when they eat and sleep at regular times. They also eat and sleep better.
- Children know what to expect, and this relaxes them. They can more easily get ready for the next activity.
- Children are less likely to misbehave when there is a routine.
- Children learn better when there is a routine and can gradually do more for themselves.
- Routines help families to feel closer to one another.

Tips for Successful Routines

- Find a schedule that works well for the whole family.
- Try to keep eating and sleeping times the same each day but be flexible if you notice that your child is hungry or sleepy.
- Let your child know ahead of time about the next activity. For example, "After we tidy up, we'll make lunch together."
- Be patient with your child. Learning new routines takes time.

Suggestions for Routines

DRESSING

- Dressing in warm winter clothing may be new for your child. Be sure to leave plenty of time to put on layers to go outside.
- Show your child what they need to wear (e.g., snow pants and gloves on a winter's day, or a sunhat and sandals in the summer) then let your child lay out their clothes for the day in advance.
- Put a special hook on the wall where your child can hang up their outdoor clothes themselves when they come in, making them easy to find the next morning.

EATING

- Children can eat five to six times each day (e.g., three meals and two or three snacks). Try to have regular times for meals and healthy snacks so children won't get hungry or cranky.
- Whenever possible, sit together as a family to eat. It will give you time to talk to each other, listen and learn.

TOILETING AND HAND WASHING

- Check and change your baby's diaper regularly to avoid rashes.
- When your child is ready to use the toilet or potty have them try to sit on it at regular times as they learn.
- Help your child learn to make it a habit to wash their hands after they use the toilet.

BATHING

- Bathing your child regularly will help them to feel comfortable and avoid rashes. Make bath time something they'll look forward to by having some toys, like plastic cups or boats, that they can play with in the tub.
- Get everything ready ahead of time so that you never leave your young child alone in the bathtub. They can easily drown.
- Help your child gradually learn how to wash themselves.

SLEEPING

- Babies need 13 to 16 hours of sleep every day, and toddlers (1-3 year olds) need 10 to 13. Having regular times for going to bed and waking up can help you make sure your child gets enough sleep.
- Sleeping in a bed for both naps and nighttime will help your child to associate laying down in a quiet place with sleep, and to relax and fall asleep more quickly.
- Having a soothing bedtime routine helps children to unwind and relax. Your routine might include quiet activities like reading stories, singing, cuddling together, saying prayers or laying down with your child until they get sleepy.

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