



## Sleep Regressions: 24 Month Regression

Last, but not least, let's talk about the 24-month sleep regression. This regression has many similarities to the 18-month regression in that it involves a crazy screaming toddler in a crib, mimicking a monkey. The good news is that this one usually isn't as ugly if your baby has solid sleep skills to begin with. It's usually more of a blip.

So here's what typically causes this blip, and what you should do about it:

### 1. Decreased Sleep Needs

Your child's sleep needs have gone down **SLIGHTLY** from when he was 18 months old. While the average 18 month old might need 13.5 hours of sleep over a 24-hour period, a 2 year old only needs 13 hours. So this doesn't mean that your 2-year-old is ready to get rid of his nap, nor does this mean that he's ready for a much later bedtime. It likely means that **his schedule needs some minor tweaking**. So for starters, his 2.5 hour nap might be a bit long by this age, which can lead to bedtime battles if he napped too much. I'd recommend a 2-hour nap at this age instead. As well, if your toddler's nap finishes at 3pm and he usually goes to sleep by 7pm, he might not be tired until 7:30pm. I wouldn't push his bedtime much later though.

### 2. His Need to Test the Limits.

Just like his 18-month old counterparts, your 2-year-old has figured out that life goes on while he sleeps—and he's not happy about that! So it's very normal for toddlers in this age range to test the limits----AGAIN----surrounding sleep. Except that this time, they can often articulate more. So they can ask for an extra story, another snack, another song—ANYTHING to stall bedtime! If this is happening, make sure that your toddler is getting ample one-on-one connection time during the daytime. Sometimes toddlers fight bedtime tooth and nail if their love tank hasn't been filled to the brim, so go bonkers when it's time to call it a day. I'd also make sure that you have a nice relaxing enjoyable bedtime routine that doesn't feel rushed—otherwise your toddler is going to push for more time! Make sure there is consistency and clear limits around the bedtime routine, such as the number of stories you read. Don't bother negotiating—when the bedtime routine is done, it's done! Continue to offer him his nap—chances are that he needs it and he'll go back to falling asleep during the daytime once this phase passes.

### 3. Separation Anxiety and Bedtime Fears.

At this age, your toddler is still learning how to regulate emotions and identify which situations warrant being scared and which situations don't, just like when he was 18 months. There may have been an incident, such as a dog barking or a thunderstorm that scared your little one. If you can identify the source of your toddler's anxiety, you're going to want to give him extra support and comfort until he gets over the stress from the event.

Here's my big warning to you though, and I discussed this in the 18-month regression—your child's wakings could start as anxiety, but then evolve into a behavioural problem over time. Your toddler might be legitimately scared of something, but all the comfort he receives in return is intoxicating! So the next night, when there's nothing to be afraid of, he might still wake up and claim that he's

scared to get that same comfort again. You can usually tell from his tone if he's legitimately scared or just pulling your leg!

If the wakings become more about dramatics than about actual fear, don't go back to co-sleeping or rocking him to sleep to solve your current problem. Remember: this is a phase! Instead, I'd recommend checking on your toddler from the doorstep every 5-10 minutes or so. Tell him that you'll be back in 10 minutes and that everything is okay—and make sure to follow through on your word. When you check on him from the doorway, repeat that same calming phrase: “Mommy loves you, it's time to go to sleep, I'll check on you in 5 minutes, everything is ok.” Don't engage or start a conversation. If he's REALLY worked up, feel free to hold him for a few minutes, just make sure he doesn't fall asleep in your arms. Some toddlers are calmed if the parent sits in the room on a chair—if you do this, make sure that you're right by the doorway and that you move the chair into the hallway after a few days. Follow the Sleep Lady Shuffle guidelines.

So in a nutshell, be understanding of your child's fears, but recognize when it's legitimate fear vs. whether you're actually getting duped by your 2 year old. **Regressions shouldn't last more than a couple of weeks**, so remind yourself that this should be over soon! If it isn't, then there are probably other underlying sleep issues going on.