

Television and Babies' Sleep¹

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There are a number of video and television programs that have been made for children under the age of three. At times it may be fun to watch your baby or toddler bounce or dance along with the characters on the screen. Many busy caregivers also use these shows to give themselves a little time for a needed break or to prepare a meal or tidy up. However, watching television may not be best for your baby or toddler's sleep.

New research has found that children under the age of three who watch television are at risk of having an irregular sleep schedule. This means that the child's naptimes and bedtime vary daily, and this can lead to other problems. Irregular sleep schedules can result in your baby or toddler not getting enough sleep and to sleep problems that can affect your child's mood, behavior, learning and health (Thompson and Christakis, 2005).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (2001) recommends that children under the age of two should not watch any television, and children over the age of two should be limited to two hours of television a day.

A great alternative to turning on the television for your baby or toddler is to provide them with a safe place, such as a playpen with age-appropriate toys, or to put on some music and sing and dance with them. Watching you is just as fun to your child as watching a character on television, and it is a good way to play or spend time with your child. Plus, the exercise and laughter can be a stress reliever for you too!

1. This document is FAR0426, one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Broadcast as program 429 in January 2007. Published on EDIS August 2012. In the interest of time and/or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/429.mp3

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References

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2001). Children, adolescents, and television. *Pediatrics*, 107(2), 423-426.

Thompson, D. A., and Christakis, D. A. (2005). The association between television viewing and irregular sleep schedules among children less than 3 years of age. *Pediatrics*, 116(4), 851-856.