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*Helping Sleepy Angels Get Their Rest!*

## Holidays & Sleep

Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year! It is also one of the most exhausting times too. There is so much to do, many places to be, and family and friends to visit. How do we fit in our little one's need for naps and a good night's sleep?

A well-rested little one can handle variations in his schedule and will just 'roll' with little changes without disruptions to his sleep. Here are some tips to help you through the season and the bigger disruptions to his regular routine.

- 1) Travelling during nap time (if they will sleep in the car) will help fit in a little bit of sleep.
- 2) Packing light is never an option so be prepared with regular items that your child finds comforting and part of his regular routine: blankets, your sheets because of the familiar scent, a special lovey, books, night light with extra bulb, a white noise machine (or radio tuned between stations), and a playpen or even a crib. If you find you are regularly visiting the same place throughout the year and/or have family that also visits and has a little one – perhaps investing in a second crib is worthwhile. Another option for frequent travellers is to use the same playpen all of the time; it will be one more thing that is the same.
- 3) Having a base 'camp' is a great way to enable you to establish a predictable routine during your vacation. Instead of jumping place to place to fit all of the visiting in; you can pick one house to 'camp' at and have all of the visiting done here. You can pick one family's home for this visit and the other family for next visit. Everyone is much happier visiting with well-rested children and the visits can be longer because you aren't packing up to get back before bedtime. You will also be avoiding the struggle of getting him settled at a new home each time you move.
- 4) Staying in the same room? You can have a little family meeting with your little one(s) and explain that "at Grandma's house we can sleep together because it is a special visit but when we go home you will be back in your room"; of course you will need to remind them of this when you return home. You would be surprised how much little ones do understand! Remember that choosing to use old sleep crutches, such as rocking or nursing to sleep, on a holiday will be OK as long as, once you are back home, you are prepared for a couple of nights of his refusal to go back to the regular routine. Consistency, as always, will be key.



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- 5) We all want to avoid disrupting everyone else's sleep wherever we are staying. Try very hard to establish a good bedtime and be consistent with your responses throughout the night. Predictability and consistency will help everyone (usually the first night is the test and then the remainder of the holiday will go smoother).
- 6) You always need to follow your little one's sleepy cues; vacation or not. Your best chance to get him to sleep is when you follow his sleep windows. You know what happens if you don't - that second wind hits! An over-tired, fussy child is difficult to deal with and you want to avoid adding stress to yourself. Once your little angel is sleeping it is time for you to relax and enjoy yourself too.
- 7) Accept help and give yourself a break. Family understands – most of the time ;)