Best Practices for Nap and Rest (Toddlers and Preschoolers)

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Follow these best practices and additional guidelines to create a heathy and safe environment for nap and rest.

✱ Licensing requirement - *learn about licensing at* http://ndchildcare.org/start/

◆ Environment Rating Scales Indicator - l*earn about ERS at* http://ndchildcare.org/providers/tools/rating-scales.html

Location

- If possible, keep children in the same area on the same floor (main floor is preferable) in order to make an evacuation easier/faster in an emergency. This also helps with supervision.
- If using a room/area only used for napping (e.g., spare bedroom, porch). Make sure it is a comfortable temperature and free from drafts.
- Designate a specific place/location for each child. Children feel more secure if they have the same spot to sleep each day. If a child falls asleep in another location while playing (such as the cozy area), it is recommended to move the child to his/her nap place and place on his/her own nap items. ◆

Lighting

- Dim the lights or close the blinds, but keep enough light to allow for supervision and for safety. ◆

Noise

- Room should be quiet or play soft soothing music. ◆

Childproof Room

- Make sure hazards are out of reach or locked if an adult is not present in the room at all times to supervise. ✱ ◆

Sleeping Surface

- Use a cot/mat or washable barrier such as a sleeping bag, blanket, bath mat, etc.
  ✱ Children cannot sleep directly on floor. ◆ Use a cot or mat.
- If an elevated surface (e.g.,couch or adult bed) is used for sleep, make sure the child is developmentally ready to sleep on an elevated surface in order to prevent an injury. Cover the area with a removable washable barrier such as a sheet and provide an individual pillow with a removable pillow case for laundering.
- If bunk beds are used, the top bunk should not be used by children under 6 years old. Bunk beds must have side/guardrails. Check spaces between the rails to make sure they are less than 3 ½" to prevent a head entrapment. Make sure frame is solid and all hardware is tight and in place. If children under 6 years old can use the bottom bunk and the top bunk is not being used, remove the ladder to the top bunk if possible or consider the child's behavior (e.g., would the child try to climb the ladder to the top bunk when not supervised?)

Sheets and Barriers

- Provide a washable material as a barrier on a mat/cot for comfort. Options: fitted crib sheet; sheets made for cots/mats; king size pillow case works as a sleeve over a mat; large towels with elastic bands at the corners.
  ◆ Washable material cover stays in place on the cot/mat.
- Sheets on cots can be left on the cots as long as they do not touch another child's cot when stacking.

Purchasing Nap Mats

- Choose nap mats that are "PVC free"
- Don't purchase nap mats that have flame retardants
- Avoid purchasing nap mats that are labeled "Meets Technical Bulletin 117"
- Avoid nap mats that contain antimicrobials
- If mats are torn, it is recommended to replace them. Exposed foam can collect germs or can be a safety hazard for those under 3 years of age.

Purchasing cots

- Plastic frame is safer than a metal frame and easier to clean.
- Frame should be stable.
- Check plastic frames for cracks - cover sharp edges with duct tape or replace cot.
- Check metal frames for pinching hazard or sharp edges – cover sharp edges with duct tape or replace cot.

Cleaning of Sleeping Surfaces/Linens

- Mats/cots – clean with soap and water weekly if labeled or clean before it is used by another child. Disinfection is required if soiled with body fluids. ✱ ◆
- Blankets, pillow cases, sheets, sleeping bags, bath mats, etc. – launder weekly or sooner if soiled. Launder or change between children. ✱ ◆

Selection of Nap Items

- Allow children to bring special nap items from home – helps to provide comfort/security.
- Limit the amount of nap items that each child can bring e.g., one stuffed toy, one blanket, one pillow.
- Limit the size of the items e.g., travel size pillow instead of standard size pillow or body pillow.
- Pillows must be washable or have removable case.
- Limit the size of blanket e.g., one small blanket instead of large quilt/comforter.
- Limiting the amount and size of nap items can help with storage and with the ability to launder the items.

Storage of nap items

- Store each child's nap items separately. Options for separate storage: XL Ziploc bags, vinyl pillow cases, plastic containers, cubbies. ✱ ◆
- Nap items can be stored between cots if the nap items are enclosed in a plastic bag or vinyl pillow case.

Space between children when napping:

- Separate by 3 feet, or a solid barrier.
  If solid barrier is used, provider must have easy access to the child.
  If not able to provide 3 feet of space, alternate head to feet.

  ◆ 18" minimum to 3 feet (preferred) between children or a solid barrier that is tall enough so that if a child sits up, they can't see over the barrier.

Supervision:

- If an adult cannot remain in room or area with children, use an infant monitor and conduct regular visual checks.
  ✱ Children must be within hearing or vision at all times.
  ◆ Visually checking children every 10-15 min in family/group child care programs.
  ◆ Children remaining in sight and hearing of a staff member at all times for nap in child care centers.
- Supervision should be pleasant, responsive, and warm.
  Help children to relax if needed e.g., rub/pat back, sit by child. ◆

Scheduling naps

- Naps are recommended to be scheduled appropriately. Naps should not be too early, too late, too long, too short, or not dependable from day to day. Naps should also be flexible to meet each child's need. When a child is tired, the child should be able to nap instead of keeping the child up until the scheduled nap time for all children. ◆
  ✱ Napping schedules are set according to the children's ages and needs.
- For children who do not nap or for those who are early risers, it is recommended to allow those children to participate in quiet activities instead of requiring them to remain on their sleeping surface for the entirety of the nap time. ✱ ◆

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