

# Camping Out

**Camping Out** is a strategy for dealing with persistent settling and waking problems in babies and young children. It can also be helpful with older children who are having problems getting to sleep, particularly if they feel anxious or frightened.

## Camping out step-by-step

Before you start, have a good bedtime routine in place, see the *Good Sleep Habits* handout.

When doing Camping Out, you sit next to your child's bed and gradually (over nights) move further away. Each night you stay with your child until they fall asleep and then you leave the room. This helps children learn how to settle themselves to sleep, rather than needing you to be nearby.

**1. Stay on each step:** For a few nights until your child gets used to this new arrangement. Use the same approach whenever you settle your child for sleep, such as if they wake overnight and for any daytime naps.

Step 1. Place your chair next to your child's bed or cot. Sit, and pat or stroke your child off to sleep.

Step 2. With the chair in the same place, sit next to your child, but do not touch them, until they fall asleep.

Step 3. Move the chair away (half a metre or so) from your child's bed or cot. Sit there until they fall asleep.

Step 4. Continue to gradually move the chair toward the doorway and out of your child's room over a period of one to three weeks.

**2. Reward:** Reward your child in the morning for being able to stay in their own bed at the start of the night (talked about more in the Rewards handout).

If things haven't improved after two weeks, talk to your doctor or child and family health nurse. They'll be able to help you develop a program tailored to your child's needs.

## TIPS: SETTLING YOUR CHILD

### Sleep time not play time!

If your child tries to play with you, calmly say it is sleep time and you will only stay if they lie down for sleep. If they continue, leave for a short time (a minute or two). When you return, again say you will only stay if they lie down for sleep.

### Try to avoid making eye contact.

This tells them that play time has finished. It might also help to close your own eyes.

### Some younger children get angry that their parents aren't picking them up

Resist the temptation to pick them up. If you do, you may reinforce this habit. Your child will eventually learn that you are there for comfort, but not for picking up.