

Early morning waking

Waking up before 6am can be exhausting for parents although children seem to cope better! Early morning waking is common in children 3 years and older, but they eventually grow out of it.

The first step: Why are they waking?

The first step to managing early morning waking is to work out why it might be happening.

Some of the common reasons include:

- Your child gets a 'reward' e.g. playing with TV or iPad when they wake up early.
- Your child goes to bed too early (e.g. before 7pm), has enough sleep but then wakes up before 6am.
- Your child gets woken by light or noise.
- Your child is just 'wired' this way – they are early morning people perhaps like you.

What to do if your child's waking is being rewarded

You need to remove their '*reward*'. Tell them that if they get up before 6am, they cannot watch TV, use the iPad etc. Some parents need to put the TV controls and electronic games, computers etc. out of reach of their child each night. If your child does as you have asked, then you can give them a more appropriate reward e.g. choosing dessert for dinner the next night, visiting the park on the way home, stamps or stickers.

What to do if your child goes to bed too early

Gradually set your child's bedtime later by 15 minutes every 2-3 nights. This can help some children to sleep in, but does not always work!

What to do if your child wakes to light or noise.

Make sure you have darkened their room before going to bed with blinds, curtains or even cardboard over their windows. If noise outside the house is waking them, try using a radio with soft music or 'white noise' playing to mask the outside noise.

What to do if your child is just "wired" this way.

If this is the case, you may not be able to get your child to sleep past 6am but you can get your child to be quiet (and not wake the rest of the house!) before then.

Some ideas which might help include:

- Setting a clock radio for the music to come on at 6am and tell your child they cannot come out of their room until they hear the music. Reward your child (see *Rewards* handout) for being able to do this.
- Put a digital clock in their room and tell your child they cannot get up until they see the number '6' on the clock. Again, reward your child for being able to do this.
- If your child cannot read numbers, you could try using a clock that lights up at the right time to get up.