

My child sleepwalks, is something wrong?

No, in fact sleepwalking among children is quite common.

According to the National Academy for Childhood Sleep Disorders, 18% of children sleepwalk and it is more common among boys. Sleepwalking typically occurs in children between the ages of 4 and 11 years, with the most episodes between ages 4 and 6.

Most children outgrow the episodes as they enter into adolescence, so there is no need to worry. Only if children begin sleepwalking after age 9, is it likely that it will persist into adulthood. For most children who sleepwalk just about once a month, sleepwalking does not indicate other medical or psychological problems nor require intervention.



When should I be

If your child tends to sleepwalk occasionally, you should not be concerned as sleepwalking is not harmful. While sleepwalking itself is harmless, children can often find themselves in dangerous situations during a sleepwalking episode.

Therefore, if your child sleepwalks on a nightly basis, exits the house, engages in dangerous activities, injures himself or herself frequently during sleepwalking or is tired during the day you should seek professional help.

Looking for more information?

Talk your child's pediatrician first if you have concerns about their sleep patterns.

- <http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/sleep/sleepwalking.html>
- <http://www.childrentoday.com/resources/articles/sleepwalking.htm>
- <http://www.lpch.org/clinicalSpecialtiesServices/ClinicalSpecialties/SleepDisorders>

Your Child and Sleepwalking

(Somnambulism)

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<http://www.end-your-sleep-deprivation.com>



What can I do about it?

There are some measures that you can take to help ensure your sleepwalker's safety:

- Do not let your child sleep in a bunk bed and have their bedroom on the ground floor of your home to prevent your child from falling.
- Remove dangerous or hazardous objects from reach.
- Remove obstacles that your child could stumble upon at night.
- Lock all of the doors and windows of your home, possibly with child safety locks to prevent them from leaving.
- If you find your child sleepwalking, don't panic. Do not shake him or yell as this might startle and scare him. Gently guide him or her back to bed.

What are the symptoms?

If your child sleepwalks you likely find him or her with open eyes, sitting up in bed in the middle of the night, repeating certain motions, getting out of bed and walking around. Their movements will be clumsy, and they may fall and injure themselves. You might notice that your child looks dazed and that she is unresponsive when you talk to her. Sleepwalking is also commonly accompanied by sleeptalking that can either be mumbled and incomprehensible or very clear. It may even seem as though they are talking to you, except the conversation doesn't make sense.

Your child may even engage in inappropriate behaviors that they would not do while awake, such as urinate in odd places and use obscene language. You might also find that your child is difficult to wake up, and once they are awake they may be disorientated, confused and have no memory of what they have just done. Sleepwalking behaviors can range from simply sitting up in bed, to running around the house, to engaging in complex, regular behaviors. Episodes can last anywhere from 30 seconds to over 5 minutes and tend to occur early in the night, during the first third of the sleep episode. While this might be disturbing to see for the first time, don't be alarmed.

Can I prevent sleepwalking?

There are some things that you can do that may prevent your child's sleepwalking:

- Establish a consistent sleep schedule for your child that ensures that they get enough sleep a night (9+ hours) and avoid excessive sleepiness, as especially deep sleep may trigger an episode.
- Avoid caffeine or chemical depressants before bed.
- Have your child go to the restroom before bed, as a full bladder might trigger an episode.
- Ensure that your child is relaxed and cozy while going to bed. Play soft music and ensure that their room is quiet.
- In serious cases of sleepwalking a psychiatric evaluation might result in recommendations of hypnosis or

