During the early years of life, nap schedules are in a continuous state of change. After a newborn period of all-day napping, babies eventually settle into a regular two-nap-a-day routine. Most children switch from these two daily naps to one nap sometime between the ages of 12 and 24 months. However, that year of difference is a very long span of time. This shows that age alone is not the only factor to consider when changing your baby's nap routine.

Changing your baby from two daily naps to one nap isn’t about what your child thinks he wants, nor is it about the schedule you’d like to have. It's about the biological need for two naps versus one. Naps at different times of the day serve different purposes in mind and body development at different ages. For example, morning naps have more dreaming, or REM sleep, which makes them important for young babies who require it for early brain development. You don’t want to rush the process if your child is still benefiting from this important sleep time.

There is another consideration when deciding to make a schedule change: The length of time that your child is awake from one sleep period to the next has an effect on his mood and behavior. No matter how well your baby sleeps at night naps are still very important. The older your child is, the longer he can go between sleep breaks without getting cranky. The biology behind this reason dictates that young babies need to divide their day up with two naps, but older babies can handle a full day with only one nap.

Since there is a wide range of what's normal it's important to study each child’s behavior to see when he is ready to transition to one nap a day. Use the following lists as a guide.

**Signs That your Child Needs TWO NAPS Daily.**

- Your child is under 12 months old
- When you put your child down for a nap he plays, resists, or fusses for a while but always ends up sleeping for an hour or more
- When you take your child for car rides during the day he usually falls asleep
- If your child misses a nap he is fussy or acts tired until the next nap or bedtime
- Your child is dealing with a change in his life (such as a new sibling, sickness, or starting daycare) that disrupts his nap schedule
- Your child misses naps when you're on the go, but when you are at home he takes two good naps

**Signs That Your Child Is Ready to Change to ONE DAILY NAP.**

- When you put your child down for a nap he plays or fusses before falling asleep, and then takes only a short nap, or never falls asleep at all
- Your child can go for car rides early in the day and not fall asleep in the car
- When your child misses a nap he is cheerful and energetic until the next nap or bedtime
- Your child naps well for one of his naps, but totally resists the other nap

**How to Make the Transition When Signs Point to Change**

Instead of thinking in terms of *dropping a nap* it's better to think in terms of a schedule change. The change from two naps to one nap is rarely a one-day occurrence. Most often there will be a transition
period of several months when your child clearly needs two naps on some days, but one nap on others. You have a number of options during this complicated transition time:

- Watch for your child’s sleepy signs, and put your child down for a nap when indications first appear.
- Keep two naps, but don’t require that your child sleep at both times, allow quiet resting instead.
- Choose a single naptime that is later than the usual morning nap, but not as late as the afternoon nap. Keep your child active (and outside if possible) until about 30 minutes before the time you have chosen.
- On days when a nap occurs early in the day, move bedtime earlier by 30 minutes to an hour to minimize the length of time between nap and bedtime.

The Danger of Dropping a Nap Too Soon

It’s my belief that the reputation that toddlers have which is known as the “Terrible Twos,” is very likely caused by inappropriate napping schedules. There are a great number of toddlers who switch from two naps a day to one nap, or – heaven forbid! – drop naps altogether, many months before they are biologically ready. This can result in a devastating effect on their mood and behavior: the dreaded and horrible “Terrible Twos.”

For those parents whose children suffer the “Trying Threes” or the “Fearsome Fours,” it’s likely your child is misbehaving for the same reason: an inappropriate nap schedule may be the culprit. The good news is that a modification of your child’s napping routine can make a wonderful and dramatic difference in his day – and yours.

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From The No-Cry Nap Solution: Guaranteed Gentle Ways to Solve All Your Naptime Problems by Elizabeth Pantley (McGraw-Hill, January 2009). Here is the link for information and more excerpts: http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/
Cat-Naps -- Making Short Naps Longer

By Elizabeth Pantley, Author of The No-Cry Nap Solution

Is your child a cat-napper? Does your baby fall asleep being fed, while in a car seat, sling, rocker, or someone’s arms? When transferred to bed, does your baby then sleep 30 to 50 minutes? That’s the exact length of one sleep cycle. These factors combined define the main cause of mini-naps: an inability to fall asleep or stay asleep without aid – your baby wakes fully at the end of the first sleep cycle, resulting in a too-short nap. I refer to this problem as One-Cycle Sleep Syndrome (OCSS). This leads us to understand the reason that many babies are cat-nappers and also directs us to potential solutions.

Cycle-Blender Naps

One way to help your baby sleep longer is to put him for a nap in a setting that will lull him back to sleep when he wakes between sleep cycles. Cycle-Blender naps occur in slings, cradle-swings, rocking cradles, or baby hammocks. Any of these can help cat-nappers extend their sleep time because when Baby begins to awaken the rhythmic motion can lull him back to sleep.

You can also create a Cycle-Blender nap in a stroller. Take a daily walk outside (it’s good for both of you!) or bring your stroller in the house. Walk your baby until she falls asleep, and then park the stroller near you. If she starts to move about, resume walking or give her a bit of a bounce and jiggle.

Once your baby gets used to taking a longer nap in the stroller, you can make a transition to bed naps. Start by reducing the movement, rolling slower and for less time. After your baby is asleep, park the stroller, using the jiggle if she wakes mid-nap. Over time, let your baby fall asleep in the stationary stroller parked next to his crib, and when the nap habit is in place, change to naps in the crib.

Create a Sleep-Inducing Bedroom

To encourage longer naps, keep the sleeping room dark so bright light doesn’t keep him alert between sleep cycles. To soothe your child through sleep cycle changes, use white noise (a recording of nature sounds), or relaxing music. Keep this on all through naptime. This creates a sleep cue and will mask noises that can wake a child who is shifting through sleep cycles.

Build a Better Bed

To entice your baby to have a longer nap, recreate the crib into a cozier nest. Use softer sheets, such as flannel, plus a thicker, softer crib mattress pad. You can also warm the bed surface before naptime with a towel fresh from the dryer (remove this and test the surface before laying your baby down.)

Make the Bed a Familiar Place

Let your baby have several play sessions in his crib during waking hours. Stay with him, engage his interest and introduce a few new toys. Let him see you as a part of the crib experience so that he gets a happy feeling being there. This way, when he is put in his crib for naptime and wakes up mid-nap it won’t be a lonely, foreign place, but one that carries familiar memories of fun times with you. This can help him accept it as a safe place for sleep and allow him to fall back into slumber after that first sleep cycle.
Interpret Signs of Tiredness

If you put your child for a nap before he is tired, or when he is overtired he won’t sleep as well as when you hit that ideal just-tired moment. Observe your child for signs of tiredness, such as losing interest in toys, looking glazed, becoming cranky, or slumping in his seat. Put your child for a nap the moment you see any sign of fatigue. If you take note of the time that this occurs over a week you should see a pattern emerge. This can help you set up a daily nap schedule that suits your child’s tired times perfectly.

Gauge time spans between naps

In addition to signs of tiredness also watch to see how long your child has been awake. Children can only stay happily awake for a certain period of time until they receive a biological pull towards a nap. Once that “pull” begins your child becomes fatigued and his cheerful mood begins to deteriorate. Each child has unique sleep needs, but this chart shows the typical span of time a child can stay happily awake:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Awake time span</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newborn</td>
<td>1 – 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 month old</td>
<td>2 – 3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 month old</td>
<td>3 – 4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 month old</td>
<td>4 – 6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year old</td>
<td>5 – 7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 year old</td>
<td>6 – 9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year old</td>
<td>6 – 12 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep in mind that children grow and change and their nap schedule should change with them. What’s perfect today may be different than what is perfect next month. Keep your eye on your baby and on the clock.

From The No-Cry Nap Solution: Guaranteed Gentle Ways to Solve All Your Naptime Problems by Elizabeth Pantley (McGraw-Hill, January 2009). Here is the link for information and more excerpts: http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/
The Nap-Resister: When Your Child Needs a Nap but Won’t Take One

By Elizabeth Pantley, Author of The No-Cry Nap Solution

Daytime naps might last just a few short hours, but they can affect all twenty-four hours of a child’s day. Naps can improve a child’s mood and reduce fussiness, crying, whining, and tantrums. Studies show that children who nap daily get sick less often, grow taller, and are less likely to be obese when they grow up. Naps enhance attention span and brain development. Naps can also help make up for any shortage in nighttime sleep. Even a one hour shortage in overall sleep hours can have a negative effect on a child – compromising alertness and brain function, and increasing fussiness and fatigue.

There are many ideas for helping a child to take a nap, but the best idea in the world may not work for you if the solution doesn’t address the reason that your child won’t nap. There is not just one reason that babies and young children refuse to nap – there are hundreds of different reasons. Before you decide on a solution you need to understand your child’s motivation. Once you figure out the cause of your child’s “nonnappingness” you can put together a plan to overcome her resistance. Here are a few typical reasons kids won’t nap – and suggestions to solve each problem:

**Problem:** Has outgrown the current nap schedule  
**Solutions:** Think about any changes in your child’s life, growth or development. Has he learned to crawl, begun to eat solid food or started daycare? Any change can also affect sleep patterns. Watch your child for signs of tiredness between naps and adjust your schedule to meet his new needs.

**Problem:** Nap schedule doesn’t match your child’s biological clock  
**Solutions:** Naptime, bedtime, mealtime, exposure to light and darkness, and activity all can affect your child’s biological clock. Look at your child’s schedule to be sure these things occur at reasonable times every day. The improper order of things (such as active, brightly lit playtime just before bed) can affect your child’s rhythm.

**Problem:** Nap schedule isn’t consistent from day to day  
**Solutions:** If on weekdays nap times, bedtime and wakeup time are specific, but on weekends they’re hit and miss, then your child will be functioning with a constant bout of jetlag. Other inconsistencies can also affect this, such as when your child naps at a certain time at daycare, but a different time at home, or if he takes a nice long nap on days when you are at home but takes a short one in the car (or skips a nap entirely) when you are on the go. Set up a possible nap schedule for your child and do your best to stay within a half hour of the nap times that you have set up.

**Problem:** Child is overtired and over-wired by nap time  
**Solutions:** If you miss your child’s signs of fatigue he can quickly move past his tired spell, past overtired, and into a second wind – that state of artificial energy which often brings with it more crying, fussing, whining and tantrums. When you miss your child’s tired signs it also means he won’t be able to fall asleep when you do finally put him in bed.

To learn your child’s sleepy signs it can help to watch him in the hour after he first wakes up in the morning, when he is well rested. Compare this to his behavior during the time from dinner to bedtime, when most children show signs of fatigue. As his usual bedtime draws near, make note of how his behavior and body language differs from when he is alert and refreshed. Aim to put your child for a nap as soon as he shows signs of fatigue. A tired child will fall asleep easily and sleep longer and better.

**Problem:** Reliance on a specific sleep aid  
**Solutions:** A child who is accustomed to falling asleep in one very specific way can easily become
so used to this one method that if you try to have him nap under any other condition he would be physically unable to do so. The best way to understand a child’s association needs are to examine them from your own viewpoint. It’s possible that you sleep well in your own bed but struggle to sleep at a hotel or someone else’s home. Some children’s sleep associations are so strong it can only be compared to asking you to sleep on a roller coaster!

The most common nap-preventing associations are breastfeeding or bottlefeeding to sleep, being held by loving arms, or sleeping in a swing, bouncer or car seat. These are wonderfully comforting places for a child to nap – but when they become necessary for sleep then it’s likely to cause a problem for the parent who must provide naptime services. These associations are usually so necessary to your child’s sleep that they override every other reason or solution. Because these are complicated issues each of these associations has its own chapter of information and solutions in other parts of this book.

**Problem:** Sneaky micro-naps

**Solutions:** The very first stage of sleep can last as little as five minutes and can reduce feelings of sleepiness– it lifts the lid and let’s the steam out just enough. If your child hits a tired zone and is lying on the sofa, sitting in a swing, or going for a ride in the car, he may nod off for five or ten minutes. This micro-nap doesn’t give your child the full benefit of a real nap, but can be just enough to rejuvenate him and prevent him from being able to sleep when you put him in bed later for a nap.

To circumvent this problem, avoid putting your child in a nap-inducing environment, like a ride in the car, or time in his swing, at a time when he’s likely to need a nap, unless you can leave him for a full long nap.

**Problem:** Health troubles

**Solutions:** If any health issue is bothering your child it can definitely affect his sleep. Allergies and asthma are two of the most common childhood diseases. Both of these conditions can make it difficult for your child to breathe comfortably when lying down. Colic, reflux, ear infections and difficult bouts of teething are other conditions that can prevent a child from napping well.

If your child suffers from any medical issues good naps are especially important for his health. If this is the case with your child it will be helpful if you are very flexible and open to finding any solution that helps him sleep. Put aside any notion that your child must sleep in a certain place or a certain way, and open yourself to the concept that any nap is better than no nap at all.

At the same time, talk with various medical experts about your child’s health matters and look to find the best solutions for your child.

**Tips for encouraging naptime**

No matter why your child won’t nap, there are a few specifics that can be helpful as you encourage any child to take regular naps. Keep these basic principles in mind:

- Maintain a consistent daily schedule that works with your child’s natural body clock. Create a predictable pattern to the day – with meals and naptime happening at reliable times.
- Modify your schedule according to your child’s sleepy signs. No matter what the clock says, it’s nap time when your child becomes quieter, loses interest in toys or playtime, fusses, stares off into the distance, rubs his eyes or ears, and of course: if he begins to yawn.
- Have a relaxing pre-nap routine to cue your child that naptime is here and help him wind down and relax.
- Set up a sleeping place that is cozy and that sets the stage for sleep. Dress your child comfortably for sleep.
- Keep mornings bright and active, and the half hour before each nap session quiet, dimly lit, and calm.
- Keep in mind that you cannot force a child to *sleep*, but you can follow the basic rules of
biology, gauge your child's sleepy signals, and create a setting that is inductive to sleep and relaxation.

From *The No-Cry Nap Solution: Guaranteed Gentle Ways to Solve All Your Naptime Problems* by Elizabeth Pantley (McGraw-Hill, January 2009). Here is the link for information and more excerpts: [http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/](http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/)
Why Short Cat-Naps Are Not Good Enough
By Elizabeth Pantley, Author of The No-Cry Nap Solution

If your child's naps are shorter than an hour and a half in length, you may have wondered if these brief naps provide enough rest for your little one. You might suspect that these catnaps aren't meeting your child's sleep needs – and you would be right. The science of sleep explains why a short nap takes the edge off, but doesn't offer the same physical and mental nourishment that a longer nap provides.

It takes between 90 and 120 minutes for your child to move through one entire sleep cycle, resulting in a Perfect Nap. It has been discovered that each stage of sleep brings a different benefit to the sleeper. Imagine, if you will, magic gifts that are awarded at each new stage of sleep:

**Stage 1 - Very light sleep**
Lasts 5 to 15 minutes

**The gifts:**
Prepares body for sleep
Reduces feelings of sleepiness

**Stage 2 - Light to moderate sleep**
Lasts up 15 minutes

**The gifts:**
Increases alertness
Improves motor skills
Stabilizes mood
Slightly reduces homeostatic sleep pressure

**Stage 3 - Deep sleep**
Lasts up to 15 minutes

**The gifts:**
Strengthens memory
Release of growth hormone
Repair of bones, tissues and muscles
Fortification of immune system
Regulates appetite
Releases bottled up stress
Restores energy
Reduces homeostatic sleep pressure
Stage 4 – Deepest sleep
Lasts up to 15 minutes
The gifts:
Same benefits as Stage 3, but enhanced

Next Stage – Dreaming
Lasts up to 9 to 30 minutes
The gifts:
Transfers short-term memory into long-term memory
Organizes thoughts
Secures new learning
Enhances brain connections
Sharpens visual and perceptual skills
Processes emotions
Relieves stress
Inspires creativity
Boosts energy
Reduces homeostatic sleep pressure (The biological process that creates fatigue and irritability.)

Longer naps
For as long as your child sleeps
The gifts:
Repeat all of the above stages in cycles

In order for your child to receive all of these wonderful gifts he must sleep long enough to pass at least once through each stage of sleep. Longer naps will encompass additional sleep cycles and provide a continuous presentation of gifts.

Newborn babies have unique cycles that slowly mature over time. A newborn sleep cycle is about 40 to 60 minutes long, and an infant enters dream sleep quickly, skipping several sleep stages. Infants need several sleep cycles to receive their full allotment of gifts. If your infant is sleeping only 40-60 minutes at naptime it is an indication that your baby is waking between cycles instead of returning to sleep on his own. We’ll cover a plethora of ideas to help your baby learn to go back to sleep without your intervention.

Now you can clearly see why a short nap doesn’t provide your baby or young child the best benefits of napping. You can also see why a mini-nap can fool you into thinking it is enough – since the very first five to fifteen minutes reduce feelings of sleepiness and bring that whoosh of second-wind energy that dissipates quickly, resulting is fussiness, crying, crankiness, tantrums and whining.
From *The No-Cry Nap Solution: Guaranteed Gentle Ways to Solve All Your Naptime Problems* by Elizabeth Pantley (McGraw-Hill, January 2009). Here is the link for information and more excerpts: [http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/](http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/)
The Volcano Effect: Why Skipping a Nap Results in Meltdown

By Elizabeth Pantley, Author of The No-Cry Nap Solution

From the moment your child wakes in the morning he is slowly using up the benefits of the previous night's sleep. He wakes up totally refreshed, but as the hours pass, little by little, the benefits of his sleep time are used up, and an urge to return to sleep begins to build. When we catch a child at in-between stages and provide naps, we build up his reservoir of sleep-related benefits, allowing him a "fresh start" after each sleep period.

As shown on the sleep chart below, as children age, the length of time that they can stay "happily awake" increases. A newborn can only be awake one or two hours before tiredness sets in, whereas a two year old can last five to seven hours before craving some down time for a nap. When children are pushed beyond their biological awake time span without a break that's when they become fatigued, fussy and unhappy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>“Happily Awake” span of time between naps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newborn</td>
<td>1 – 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 month old</td>
<td>2 – 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5 – 7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 year old</td>
<td>6 – 8 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year old</td>
<td>6 – 12 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the day progresses, and the sleep pressure builds, a child becomes fussier, whinier, and less flexible. He has more crying spells, more tantrums, and less patience. He loses concentration and the ability to learn and retain new information. The scientific term for this process is “homeostatic sleep pressure” or “homeostatic sleep drive” . . . I call it The Volcano Effect. We’ve all seen the effects of this on a baby or child, as it is often as clear as watching a volcano erupt; nearly everyone has observed a fussy child and thought or said, “Someone needs a nap!”

As a child progresses through his day, his biology demands a sleep break to regroup, refresh and repair. If a child does not get this break the problem intensifies: the rumblings and tremors become an outright explosion. Without a nap break, the homeostatic pressure continues building until the end of the day, growing in intensity – like a volcano – so that a child becomes overtired, wired and unable to stop the explosion. The result is an intense bedtime battle with a cranky, overtired child, or an infant who won’t fall asleep no matter how tired you know he is.

Even more, a child who misses naps day after day builds a sleep deprivation that launches her into the volcano stage much easier and quicker. If she is missing naps and also lacking the right quality or quantity of nighttime sleep... watch out!

Newborns and young babies have a much shorter span in which their sleep pressure builds. They rapidly reach the peak of their volcano in one to three hours. This is why newborns sleep throughout the day, and why young babies require two or three or four daily naps. Over time, as a baby’s sleep cycle matures he will be able to go longer periods between sleeps. It is not until age 4 or 5 that a child is able to go happily through the entire day without a nap, and sleep research suggests that even through adulthood a mid-day nap or rest break is extremely beneficial in reducing the pressure in all human beings.

The Volcano Effect is not something reserved only for children! This biological process affects adults as well. Understanding this can help you interpret what is really going on in your home at the end of
a long day, when children are fussy and parents are grumpy – resulting in a whole mountain range of volcanoes.

Sleep pressure can be exaggerated by environmental issues such as the previous poor night’s sleep, on-going sleep deprivation, or daily stress. What’s more, each person’s moodiness feeds off the others, causing contagious crankiness. And then you’ll find yourself losing patience and saying to your child, “I’m sorry, honey. Mommy’s just tired right now.” (This is a very telling explanation we don’t often stop to analyze.)

This Volcano concept brings to light one more important point: Quality naps can make up for lost night sleep – but extra nighttime sleep does not make up for missed naps, due to the homeostatic sleep pressure concept. Therefore, no matter how your child sleeps at night – great sleeper or poor sleeper -- his daily naps are critically important to release the rising sleep pressure.

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