

Early Morning Wakes

For parents already exhausted before the day even begins.



By Dani Scaletti
Paediatric Nurse & Certified Infant + Child Sleep Consultant



Sleep Nurse Dani
@sleep.nurse.dani



Early Morning Wakes



If your little one is waking at 4:30–5:30am every morning, you're probably exhausted before the day has even started.

Early morning wakes (EMW) can feel incredibly frustrating because they're rarely caused by just ONE thing. One day you try an earlier bedtime, the next day social media tells you bedtime is too early. One person says your baby is overtired, another says they're undertired... and before long, you're questioning everything. Remember: Sleep is never one-size-fits-all. What works beautifully for one child may not suit another, which is why it's important to look at the whole picture

What we do know, is *something* is reducing your child's ability to stay asleep during the lightest part of the night. Usually, it's (at least) one of the following -->

- ☐ **Sleep Pressure**
- ☐ **Undertiredness**
- ☐ **Sleep associations**
- ☐ **Habitual waking**
- ☐ **Hunger**
- ☐ **Sleep Environment**



What's your child's early wake trying to tell you?

Signs it's overtired...

- ☐ They wake crying or upset
- ☐ They're grumpy within 30-60min of waking
- ☐ They fall asleep in the car soon after
- ☐ They struggle to stay awake until their first nap
- ☐ They're catching up on sleep the next day

Signs it's undertired...

- ☐ They wake up happy & ready to play
- ☐ They chat and play happily in the cot
- ☐ They don't seem tired before their first nap
- ☐ They have lots of energy through the day

Other signs to consider....

- ☐ They wake looking for a feed (hunger)
- ☐ They wake as soon as the room gets light (habit)
- ☐ They need help getting back to sleep every morning (sleep association)
- ☐ Early wakes started after travel or illness (regression of independent sleep)
- ☐ They've recently dropped a nap (sleep balance transition period)

Ticking several boxes doesn't always mean you've found the answer, as they're often caused by a combination of factors. Aim to rule out the factors that could be contributing.



Early morning wakes

Avoid constantly changing everything.

Changing bedtime, naps, settling technique, feeds, wake windows all at once makes it very difficult to identify what's helping.

Instead:

- make ONE adjustment at a time
- trial consistently for several days
- look at overall patterns, not just one rough morning



Things to focus on:

☐

Overall sleep balance

☐

Support transition from milk to solids

☐

Watch light exposure

☐

Review Naps



When personalised support may help

Sometimes families try EVERYTHING and still feel stuck. That's often because early wakes are rarely solved by tips online. There's generally a lot of pieces to the puzzle that need to be put together, and that looks different for every child.

This is why personalised support can make such a difference.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or unsure what actually applies to YOUR child, that's what I'm here for.

My sleep support calls and personalised support packages are designed to help families:

- ✓ Understand WHY sleep struggles are happening
- ✓ Troubleshoot routines and sleep balance
- ✓ Feel more confident moving forward
- ✓ Create realistic plans that actually suit their family

Lets figure out what's going on [here](#).



A final note from me...



If mornings have been feeling hard lately, I get it. I VIVIDLY remember hearing my kids cry out, checking the clock and seeing 5:30am... knowing I should probably keep things dark, stay consistent, and try to support them back to sleep.

But when you're exhausted.... survival mode kicks in.

I'd bring them into bed, put Bluey on, and hope for just a tiiiiny bit more rest. Sleep deprivation makes even the things we know feel impossible to implement consistently.

So if you're feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, or stuck in the cycle right now, please know that it's ok to get help. Having support doesn't just help your child sleep better... it helps YOU breathe a little easier too, and allows you to *enjoy* these early years that FLY by so quickly.

Dani x