

## **BEDTIME RITUALS**

By the time parents get their preschoolers to bed, they're about ready for bed themselves! Sleep and sleep-related problems during the preschool years are normal but can be demanding for parents. Children can be "expert delayers" in keeping parents in demand - a drink, a story, a kiss, the toilet, a hug and confidences.

When a child appears in the living room or kitchen after being put to bed, the best policy is to take the child's hand and silently and unemotionally escort the child back to bed. Here are some tips to smooth out bedtime for preschoolers:

- Establish a regular bedtime, even if your child does not always fall asleep then.
- Calm things down an hour or two before bedtime. Relax rather than roughhouse before bedtime.
- Try to maintain a pre-planned schedule where everyone knows what will happen next. The schedule may include brushing teeth, bathing, talking, and reading stories.
- Use a night-light or leave the door open if it makes your child more comfortable.
- The two most common reasons why children reject bedtime are that they are not tired and feel lonesome. For this reason, it is often devastating if you lock a child's door. A safety gate works wonders without causing panic.