

Traveling

You would think that any family who's worked their tushes off to get great sleep would deserve a little vacation. We're certainly not here to argue. You do deserve it! We hope you're going somewhere fun and relaxing and away-from-it-all.

But. Yes, there's a "but." The truth is that not all children can travel well. Some are incredibly flexible and just adapt to the new environment and new time zone without batting an eye. (If you have one of these amazing children, be careful about bragging too much; some jealous parent might switch your suitcase for one filled with sand). Many others, though, really don't like being away from home sweet home that much. They get confused or scared by the new surroundings, and their bodies feel tired from traveling. They resist going to sleep, or they wake throughout the night, crying. Suddenly, your great little sleeper at home can become your worst little nightmare away from home. There are several things you can do, though, to ensure

that your travel will go as smoothly as possible.

Getting there

Try to schedule travel—whether a flight or car trip—during a naptime or around your child’s bedtime. Yep, sometimes red-eye flights might be the way to go. Hopefully, your child will then be able to sleep on the way and not become extremely overtired by the time you get to your destination. The other benefit of a night flight is that your child will not get too bogged down with boredom being strapped into his seat for too long before it’s time for some shut-eye.

For an older child, be sure to pack several sippy cups or juice boxes with favorite beverages (but beware the cranberry or grape juice that will stain clothing or seats), easy, no-mess snacks (bite-size crackers, string cheese, and deli meat tend to work well—skip the fruit) and *new* toys that will be sure to entertain your child because he’s never played with them before and will occupy him longer. If you’re driving a long distance,

make frequent stops for the bathroom, or just to stretch legs and release some pent-up energy. It also may be wise to carry along all of your child's goofy cd's, painful as that may be

If you're traveling by plane, you may want to spend the extra money to invest in a separate seat for your child (sometimes airlines offer these seats at discounted rates). Doing so is not only an important protective measure for her safety—you'll be able to buckle her in for take-off and landing—but it will also give your arms a break, particularly on a long flight. For take-off and landing, plan to help your child drink some liquid; offer breast or bottle for babies, sippy cup with water or juice for older children. Swallowing continuously at these times will help prevent pressure from building in her ears and protect them from discomfort. Just make sure to wait until you actually hear the plane engine rev loudly as it begins its roar down the runway before you begin to give breast or bottle. Many parents make the mistake of offering their baby a whole feeding while the plane backs out of the gate, only to find that there are 12 other planes

in line for take-off. By the time the baby really needs to swallow, he's stuffed! For landing, the most difficult part on the ears is the actually the beginning descent and not the final touch down. Once your pilot makes the announcement that you are dropping in elevation and your own ears begin to feel a bit stuffy, that's the time to begin to offer your child fluids.

You might find that your child is nervous or upset on the flight—or, her ears may bother her despite your precautions. Translation: she might begin to wail the minute you take off and refuse to let up till the moment the wheels touch down. We've all been on public transportation—plane, train, bus—with a screaming child. (We have a theory that if you *were* once that screaming child, then karma will ensure that there's always one in your vicinity while traveling. True confessions: one of us has that karma, but we're not telling who!) It's not your fault. It's not her fault. Ignore the evil stares of the passengers around you and do the best you can; walk her around, sing her some songs, keep trying liquid, or a snack. Flight attendants are often

very sympathetic to children who get upset on flights and might even have a trick or two up their sleeves to help calm her down. Even if she doesn't, remember: this too shall pass.

Creating a good sleep environment

If your child is still in a crib, arrange for a crib at your destination, if possible. (Call in advance to ensure that it meets all safety regulations.) If it isn't possible to get a crib, bring a portable playpen. If you are using a crib, bring a crib sheet from home that you haven't washed in a few days, so it smells familiar to him. Also bring whatever else your child is currently attached to: blankies, stuffed animals, pacifiers, favorite toys or books, favorite PJs.

When you arrive at your destination, spend some time with your child in the room where he'll be sleeping, to help him orient to that space. Play with him in there; unpack while he's amusing himself on the floor. Tell him this will be his room for a while and

show him his crib or bed. Bring white noise with you to protect your child against unusual sounds in the new environment, like the clickety-clack of the room service cart in the hallway.

If you're in a hotel, blackout shades are almost always par for the course. If you'll be in someone's home, though, either bring materials with you to darken the windows (black plastic garbage bags work well, even if they don't look so hot) or graciously ask your hosts to secure these for you. The dark windows will help your child sleep till his scheduled waketime and take good naps.

Dealing with time changes

If you're traveling west to east, deciding whether to keep your child on the same time zone as home, or not, will really depend on a couple of factors. First, how long are you staying where you're going? If it's more than a week, it's going to be pretty

tough to keep your child on the same old time zone as his body will more than likely begin to adjust on it's own from sunlight.

If you're going east for *under* a week, however, you may be able to try to stay on the same time zone as the one you'll be returning to. We call this "vacation schedule"—your child will stay up later at night, then sleep later in the morning (and so will you!). So, for example, if you live in Denver and are traveling to New York (New York is two hours later than Denver), and your child normally goes to bed at 7:30 and wakes at 6:30, by the clock he'll now go to sleep at 9:30 and wake at 8:30. You can allow him to nap at the later times, too. If your child automatically wakes when Mr. Sun does, just roll with it and follow the directions below for when you travel home.

If you're traveling east to west, it's a bit trickier. Your child will inevitably wake early the first day; you really don't have a choice but to get up with him. Then, watch the clock. You're going to try to s-t-r-e-t-c-h him as far as you can toward his regular naptime, according to the time zone you're in. So for

example if you're traveling from Miami to Los Angeles (Los Angeles is three hours earlier than Miami), and your 18-month-old child normally goes to bed at 8 pm and wakes at 7 am, he may wake at 4 am the first morning (ouch!). If he normally naps at 11:30 am, try to stretch him as far toward that time by the current clock as you can; 11:30 will feel like 2:30 in the afternoon, though, so he'll never make it all the way there the first day. The first day, you might have to nap him at, say, 9 am (and then you'd try for a second shorter nap, perhaps in a car or stroller, later in the day to tide him over to bedtime). That night, you're again going to s-t-r-e-t-c-h him as far as you can toward bedtime by the current clock, but given that 8 pm will now feel like 11 pm, he might make it only till 6:30 the first night (which will feel like 9:30).

Then, the next morning, help him stretch again with his waketime; when he wakes early, try doing a check-in or two (if he's not crying hard, or if you're in an environment where you would feel comfortable allowing a bit of crying), or try laying a

hand on him and reassuring him with your soft voice: “Shhh, sweetie, it’s not time to get up yet! I’ll come get you when it’s time.” In reality, he may not be able to go back to sleep, as his body’s biorhythms are adjusting to the time change. But as long as you continue the “stretch” toward each sleep period for the next couple of days, you should arrive at a livable schedule.

Helping your child sleep away from home

When it’s time for bed, do as much of your usual wind-down routine as you possibly can. The first couple of nights are the most important in terms of ensuring consistency. Thereafter, do as much of it as you can given that you’re on vacation. For instance, you might skip the bath, but you’ll still do the feed and the book if that’s what you do at home.

Do the best you can with naps. You’ll probably be on the go a lot during the day, so if your child falls asleep in the stroller or car, it’s OK to allow this. If he doesn’t, try not to skip too many

in a row, or he'll be overtired by the time nighttime comes.

Plan to spend an extra 10 or 15 minutes helping your child wind down before sleep the first couple of nights, to help him relax and feel safe in the new environment. If your child should wake in the night, go to him—this isn't the time to let him cry, as he may legitimately be feeling afraid. Start with the most minimal assistance: try doing a check-in, using your voice and presence only, and see if he'll go back to sleep. If another minute or two goes by and he's still upset, go to him and rub his tummy (or his back, for an older child), and calm him down: "Shhh, sweetie, it's OK, I'm right here." If *that* doesn't work after another minute or two, pick your child up, hold him, comfort him...and try to put him back down awake. If all else fails, help your child to sleep. Feed him, rock him, pull him into bed with you if you have to. *And don't worry about it.* In this situation, your assistance is appropriate. The minute you get home, you'll come right back to your nice sleep foundation—your predictable bedtime routine, down awake, check-ins as needed for a night or two perhaps. Don't worry, it shouldn't feel like you're starting over—remember, he knows how to ride that bike, and he may be wobbly at first but he'll remember again.