

Toddler Sleep Regression: What It Means and How to Handle It

Just when you thought your toddler's sleep was sorted, they're suddenly waking up at 2 a.m. or fighting bedtime like it's a wrestling match. Welcome to sleep regression! Here's what Pakistani parents need to know to navigate this phase.

What is Sleep Regression?

Sleep regression is a temporary period (2–6 weeks) when a toddler who slept well starts waking frequently, skipping naps, or resisting bedtime. It's common at ages 18 months and 2 years due to:

- **Developmental leaps:** Brain growth, like learning new words or walking, can disrupt sleep.
- **Teething:** Molars coming in can cause discomfort.
- **Changes:** New sibling, daycare, or travel (like desi family weddings!) can throw them off.
- **Separation anxiety:** They may cling more at night.

Signs of Sleep Regression

- Refusing naps or taking shorter ones.
- Waking multiple times at night or very early.
- Crying or fussing at bedtime.
- Being overtired, cranky, or clingy during the day.

How to Handle It

1. **Stick to a routine:** Consistent bedtime (e.g., bath, story, sleep) signals it's time to wind down. Aim for 7–8 p.m. bedtime.
2. **Create a sleep-friendly environment:** Dark room, cool temperature (use a fan in Pakistan's heat), and white noise (like a humming fan) help.
3. **Comfort, don't reward:** If they wake, reassure with a pat or "You're okay, go sleep." Avoid picking up or feeding unless necessary.
4. **Limit screen time:** No TV or phones 1–2 hours before bed; blue light disrupts melatonin.
5. **Watch daytime sleep:** Too long naps (over 2 hours) can mess with night sleep. Wake them gently if needed.
6. **Be patient:** Don't change routines drastically; regression passes with time.

Pakistani Parenting Tips

- **Family support:** If Dadi insists on rocking them to sleep, explain consistency is key. Suggest she reads a story instead.
- **Desi remedies:** A warm glass of milk with a pinch of haldi can soothe (check with pediatrician first).
- **Cultural pressure:** Ignore comments like “Bas, bada ho gaya, sota kyun nahi?” Every child’s sleep journey is unique.

When to Seek Help

If regression lasts over 6 weeks, or your toddler seems in pain, snores loudly, or is excessively irritable, consult a pediatrician to rule out ear infections, sleep apnea, or other issues.

Sleep regressions are tough but temporary. Keep the routine, offer extra cuddles, and you’ll both be back to dreamy nights soon.