

Top Tips: Night Terrors



In February 2016, parenting author and educator Maggie Dent put a post on Facebook about night terrors. We have added to this as people offer new suggestions each time Maggie shares this top tips page.

DISCLAIMER: These tips are shared from our Facebook community – please [do your own research](#) when making choices for your family. Also please note we have left people's entries largely unedited so there will be imperfections in grammar and spelling.

The original Facebook post:

Maggie Dent

Night terrors can be worrying. [@Dr Kaylene Henderson - Child Psychiatrist](#) writes about it exploring what they are in this article: <http://drkaylenehenderson.com/night-terrors-in-children-also-known-as-sleep-terrors/> another helpful article: www.kinderling.com.au/news/night-terrors-sleep-family

I have had parents tell me that playing my free audio [Sleepytime](#) has stopped them - must soothe the nervous system.

What other suggestions are out there?

Main feedback provided from this post:

- Good routine, avoid over-stimulation
- Calm night time pre-bed procedures (bathing, singing, reading)
- Do not over heat, ensure fresh air
- Semi-awaken the child 30-45 minutes after they have gone to sleep to break the pattern
- Diffuse essential oils at night, especially Juniper
- Kinesiology
- Fully awaken the person from the night terror before returning them to sleep, otherwise episode may re-occur
- Cut out artificial sugars after midday to stop night terrors
- Healthy diet and avoid food colourings, especially blue. Gluten free diet has been known to help too
- Check their tonsils and general health to see if there is unease in the physical body that is triggering night terrors
- During and after an episode try to keep the space calm and dimly lit

Responses

Dr Kaylene Henderson - Child Psychiatrist

Thank you for sharing my article [Maggie Dent](#). Hopefully your families find it to be helpful. If anyone has any questions, I'm very happy to check in on your page and answer any that I can if this would be helpful.

Jen Atkins

Thanks Maggie for sharing Kaylene's article. My daughter started her night terrors from a very young age - initially we thought it was due to teething. Very scary experience as first time parents! When we found out what it was (by sheer coincidence) and then investigated to find family history of sleep disorders, we could deal with it. She is now 6 and it has happened only a handful of times a year - and normally when she is overtired. So for parents who are going through this, it does get better. It can feel lonely when friends and family don't understand what it is. My best advice is to keep your child to a good routine which gives them the sleep and downtime needed. And besides, once you're a parent, you never sleep well again right?!

Sharrie Corcoran

I am glad my now 6 year old seems to have grown out of night terrors, he would "wake" and cry the strangest, most hollow sounding cry, often for 30 minutes, then stop all of a sudden and go back to sleep. It was traumatic as a parent. I still have night terrors as an adult in times of stress, they are confusing and scary for my partner and I don't often remember

2 Replies: Jocelyn McLennan as an adult make sure you do not over heat in bed...winter is the worst as most people go to bed cold with too much on the bed like blankets and wool doonas...they heat up with your body heat during the night and you overheat your heart rate is up and thus the disturbance begins....are you sweating when you wake up from a nightmare?...then you have over heated....always have open windows will cool fresh air no matter the weather outside...

Sharrie Corcoran Thanks Jocelyn, no I'm not sweating and it's not a nightmare it's a night terror so I'm awake and seeing things that aren't there. I haven't had one in several months. The last one I vaguely remember seeing a huge spider and trying to swat it off my partners head, scared the heck out of him!! I just roll over and go back to sleep but it wakes him right up lol

Janine Hanks

That works for us too - 'rouse' our son 1/2 hr after he's asleep - never fails to work - been doing it for years but occasionally forget or I'm too tired myself and sure enough we'll get a sleep terror - or sleep episode I like to call them as he's often not in a 'terror' state at all - just wants to look at the imaginary ants on the wall, needs the yellow sheet (???) etc etc

Belinda Tuckfield

This is a great read, we were told to semi wake our daughter after she had been asleep for half hour 45 mins for a week to break that cycle & just over a week later she had more or less stopped having them.

Melanie Read

I'm an adult with night terrors & so is my mum. Two of my children had them when they were younger. It's extremely distressing to witness but also very distressing to experience (if you wake during the terror & therefore remember it). We all find they are more likely to occur if we get overheated in bed.

1 Reply: **Raegan Howie** That sounds really awful for everyone :(I know people who have had a lot of success with diffusing essential oils at night (in particular juniper berry) to aid with restful sleep (that is no night terrors!). Maybe that might be something you could try?! Hugs xo

Ally Berry

My daughter woke every couple of hours screaming with night terrors. It started around 2 years of age and lasted until she was 8/9. They became less frequent as she grew older. She had CAPD and this was diagnosed at 6. I stopped everything when she was around 2 I did more gentle quiet things at home instead of being out everywhere. It was a bit of a culture to be stimulating your child with loads of experiences. It was not for her. Plus. I felt more relaxed doing arts and crafts with her at home. Gentle walks around our parks. I have continued to keep my kids lives simple. I brought them up on music books games and jigsaw puzzles. So far so good. Looking back I think she was over stimulated. I was just plane exhausted. Not a good combination.

Rachael Priestly

My son had night terrors as a baby, he had been prescribed a reflux medicine as he was a TOF baby. I started to slowly wean him off the medicine and noticed his terrors were becoming less frequent. On seeing the specialist she prescribed a different medicine and I queried her about the possible link, turns out my suspicions were correct and in very rare cases it can cause them. Once he started the new medicine the terrors completely stopped! Trust your mummy intuition and always question your doctor if you feel something's not right

Tracey Gregory

Our kinesiologist stopped my son's 2 year long, several times a night night terrors with one session. Like a switch was turned off. We were lost for words!

Wendy Ann Murphy

My 7 year old daughter has them, it is awful, she screams, kicks out, usually runs into our bed & thrashes around in there, just screaming & screaming. The worst was when we were camping in France in summer, she done it every night, goodness knows what our surrounding neighbours thought - needless to say, we are never going camping in France again

Lisa McGaw

My son had night terrors at least 3-4 nights a week from 18 months of age until just older than 3. The terrors seemed to be less frequent the older he got. During these episodes he also suffered from Todds Paresis which we found out after trips to Brisbane, sleep tests and even had an mri and trialed anti-epileptic medication as well. He seems fully recovered now and is 8. He also recently diagnosed on the autism spectrum (high functioning) with ADHD. Night terrors are so frightening

Katie Kirkwood

My daughter used to get very bad night terrors and funnily enough it was only when she ate green apples... if she eats one green apple then she'll be up all night screaming, yelling and even swearing.

Jan Kimball-Smith

Definitely runs in my family, through childhood and into adulthood unfortunately. I used to thow up in my sleep when very young, have leapt violently out of bed on more than one occasion resulting in injury and sometimes wake with a bang. The episodes are rare these days, but, I find that I have to get up and fully wake to stop myself falling straight back into the same state!

Sarah Young Helen

- so much for being told they only last a couple of minutes! Also we were right - overtired kids and excited. Both of ours! Mums know their kids best xx

1 Reply: **Sarah Young** Ps I've found - after three years - that leaving him in his cot and singing stops them in kai. X

Nicola Neale Thank fully our daughter seems to have grown out of them now. Another trigger we found was her need for the toilet but she couldn't wake up to ask to go or go herself. We would take her and then settle her back into bed and she would usually go straight back to sleep.

Shari Martin Don't know if anyone else has tried it but we were told to cut out all artificial sugar from our daughters diet after midday. We did. Terrors stopped within days x

Angela Grannery

I have linked my son's night terrors to food colouring. (Now 12) Blue! It's the only colour that is a trigger.

Kris Wakefield

My eldest used to have night terrors during his daytime sleeps. He would thrash and fuss for a good half hour on a bad day. It was almost like he had not finished his nap, something disturbed him but his mind wanted to stay asleep

Jocelyn McLennan

Night terrors as with nightmares in adults happens when you over heat in bed during the night...as children do not sweat as much as an adult they cannot regulate their temperature as well...

Mish Pope

Juniper berry is also amazing diffused at night time as well for helping with this. Their little brains need a rest. Xo

Stefany Cogley Charmaine

Maggie Dent also has an audio to help children deal with anxiety.

Mandy Verrier

Thank you, thank you - your Sleepytime download helped my son (and me tonight!) xxx

Bishop Jeanes Lauren Porter I haven't read this but thought there might be some useful tips for Aurora?

1 Reply: **Lauren Porter** Yeah I read up on a few things awhile back and a lot of aurora night terrors were when she'd have a big day plus not eat properly either (especially at parties) I changed the way we ate at home to see if that helped too and its been good

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