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| Sleeping with the Parents (Bed-Sharing)Pros and Cons In general, bed-sharing is not recommended. Although it's not harmful for your children to sleep with you, it's unnecessary and it may cause problems for you. Once begun, it's a rather hard habit to break, so consider the following before you allow your child to start sharing your bed:   * Your child doesn't need to share your bed to be secure and happy. Children's fears and insecurities can be dealt with in other ways. Children turn out fine either way. In some countries, families share beds out of necessity, but most children in our country sleep happily in their own beds. * Bed-sharing is not quality time. If your child is asleep in your bed, it is a neutral time. If your child is crying and keeping you awake, it is an aggravating time. * Several studies have shown that more than half of the children who sleep with their parents resist going to bed and awaken several times during the night. Most parents who share their beds have to lie down with their child for as long as 30 to 60 minutes to get them to sleep. Most of these parents don't get a good night's sleep and become sleep deprived. Sleeping with your child is a bad choice if you are a light sleeper and you need your sleep to work well during the day. * Bed-sharing is never a long-term solution to sleep problems. Your child will not learn to sleep well in your bed and then decide on his own to start sleeping in his own bed. With every passing month, this habit becomes harder to break. Your child can no longer sleep alone. * There is no evidence that bed-sharing produces children who are more spoiled or dependent.  Prevention of Bed-Sharing  * During infancy, place your child in his crib when he is drowsy but still awake. He will learn to put himself to sleep at bedtime, which is a skill he will need to return to sleep after normal awakenings at night. * Make nighttime feedings brief and boring. This is easier to do if you and your child aren't sharing a bed. * Move your child into his own room by 3 or 4 months of age. Have a rule that he does not leave the crib at night and, after age 2, that he does not leave his bedroom at night except to go to the bathroom. * If you must sleep in the same room with your infant, don't allow him to see you during his normal awakenings. If he does, it is an invitation to play. * After 6 months of age, encourage a soft toy or stuffed animal as a security object. Otherwise he may select you as his security object.   Most children in our country do just fine with these guidelines. Putting an End to Bed-Sharing If you are sharing your bed with your child and want to stop, here are some suggestions:   * Tell your child the new rule: "You are too old to sleep with me anymore. You have your bed and I have mine. Starting tonight, I want you to stay in your bed during the night." * For being a "good sleeper" who sleeps in his bedroom all night, give him a treat with breakfast. * If your child leaves his bedroom, take him back immediately. If he does it again, close his door until he's in his bed. * If your child gets into your bed during the night, order him back to his own bed using a stern voice. If he doesn't move, take him back immediately without talking to him. * If your child gets into your bed while you are asleep, take him back to his room as soon as you discover him. If he tries to leave his room again, temporarily close his door. If you are a deep sleeper, consider using some kind of signaling device that will awaken you if your child enters your bedroom (such as a chair placed against your door or a loud bell attached to your doorknob). Some parents simply lock their bedroom door. Remind your child that it is not polite to wake up people who are sleeping, unless it is an emergency.   Expect some crying. Young children normally cry when they don't get their way. But continue to be firm and you will win back the privacy of your bed. |

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