

Helping Baby Sleep



.....
Do you recall how in old movies prisoners were tortured to tell 'state secrets'? One of the most effective methods was the “deprive the prisoner of sleep” torture!

Coping with babies and toddlers who are tricky to get down, or who are continuously waking up in the night when all we want is to get a good night’s sleep, is not easy and can often leave you feeling exhausted and distraught.... it’s like they are torturing you!

.....

Your newborn is programmed to sleep differently from you.

Your newborn is programmed to sleep differently from you and will usually sleep for around 16 hours in every 24. They don't know that people sleep at night. Indeed, they tend to sleep in short bursts through the day and night, and in blocks of up to four hours.

When newborns are awake, they're usually feeding. Playtime at this age is very short, and after feeding your baby will probably just want to go back to sleep.

Every time newborns sleep, they go through a cycle of deep sleep and light sleep. Then they wake up for a little while. During this time your baby might grizzle, groan or cry. They might also fidget and squirm going from deep to light sleep, and back again. A newborn sleep cycle takes about 40 minutes. If your baby wakes after 40 minutes, you might need to help him settle for the next sleep cycle.

Premature babies, in particular, have trouble getting into deep sleep, and sleep lightly for around 80% of their sleep time. Full-term newborns sleep deeply half the time.

Night Sleeping & Waking

In the first few months, it's common for newborns to wake 2-3 times a night for feeds. Between one and three months, the number of wakings decreases and a baby's longest period of sleep increases.

By the time your baby is around three months old, they might have begun to settle into a sleep pattern of around 4-5 hours at night. But up until six months of age, many babies still need help and attention at night

.....

Taking your child into your bed to sleep with you occasionally won't create a lifetime habit – but it is best to establish good sleeping patterns when they are young, teaching a baby to put themselves off to sleep will save you many more sleepless nights.

The major health concerns with co-sleeping are that their head shouldn't go under the bedclothes and it's not wise to sleep with your child if you are a smoker.

You may keep a cot or fold down bed in your room if your child is older, for those times when they need to sleep close to you.

.....

This is a trying period for all parents, but remember, it does end, and all children end up sleeping!

.....



Your newborn is programmed to sleep differently from you.

Being able to spot your baby's tired signs will allow you to quickly respond, giving your baby a better chance of settling to sleep more easily before they become over tired and past it.

Babies aged 3-6 months will generally be tired and in need of sleep after 1 ½ - 2 ½ hours of awake time.

Being aware of your baby's cues that they are tired and putting them to bed, enables you to establish better settling techniques and helps your child learn good sleeping routines

Signs that your baby may be tired include:

- spontaneous jerky movements (their arms and legs may move more erratically)
- they will probably lose interest in things and start to look more serious
- they may yawn, grab their ears, clench their fists
- they may start arching backwards, and show fussy behavior and crying.

When you recognise your baby's tired signs, it helps to reduce stimulation and establish a quiet-time routine.

Establish a quiet-time routine by starting to calm your baby's environment.

- Turn off TVs or stereos and let other siblings know that it's time for baby's sleep, so that they know to play quietly.
- Provide visual cues for baby by packing toys away and dimming their room (pulling the curtains etc).
- Move baby to her cot or sleeping place and speak in a quiet, soothing voice. Tell her it's time for sleeping now, with sleepy-time cuddles, a song or a softly whispered story.

In many cultures, babies and grown-ups have always slept together. Some parents in western cultures, such as Australia, are now also choosing to bring their babies into their beds to sleep. This is called co-sleeping

Young children get overtired easily. When they do, they find it harder to get to sleep. Once you can spot those telltale signs of tiredness, you'll be able to settle your child to sleep before grumpiness sets in.

As a general rule, babies who are 6 - 12 months will need to sleep after 2 -3 hours awake, and will usually show signs of needing sleep around this time. Babies who are 12 - 18 months will sometimes need a short morning nap, and a longer sleep in the afternoon and will show tired signs if they miss out on this.

Look for older babies tired signs: they are more prone to crying and become easily upset, frustrated and fussy. They also tend to become more clingy and more in need of your attention when they need that all important sleep!

If you are having trouble with your baby or child's sleep patterns, such as settling your baby or night waking, talk to your early childhood nurse or your doctor for advice and assistance.

Want more information?

Parentline NSW

Phone 1300 1300 52

For advice on child health and parenting
www.parentline.org.au

Families NSW

Various resources to help parents at any stage in life.
www.families.nsw.gov.au

PANDA (Post and Antenatal Depression Association)

Phone 1300 726 306

For information, support and counselling for new parents, family and friends
www.panda.org.au

SIDS and Kids

Phone 1800 308 307, 24 hours

For information about safe infant sleeping and bereavement support www.sidsandkids.org

Local Services

Lismore Community Health - Child and Family

Phone 02 6620 7687 8am – 5:00pm,
Monday to Friday to make an appointment.

Family Support Network

Family Workers can offer you practical and emotional support to enhance & strengthen your parenting & family relationships.
Phone: 02 6621 2489 www.fsn.org.au