

Top Ten Ways to Help Baby Sleep



Sleep Matters

Children and adults need to get enough sleep so they can play, learn and concentrate during the day. A lot happens in our bodies and brains while we sleep. For example, when it's dark, children's bodies produce growth hormone. This is one of the reasons why young children spend so much time sleeping – their bodies and brains have so much growing to do!

1. LEARN BABY'S TIRED SIGNS

Rather than waiting till your baby is 'past it', put her to bed as soon as she shows tired signs, which include: yawning, 'jerky' movements, losing interest in people and toys, and fussing. If you miss the window of opportunity, your baby is likely to find it harder to settle.

2. SWADDLING & WRAPPING

Swaddling or wrapping your baby provides a sense of security, and helps minimise the startle reflex (a primitive survival reflex that produces spontaneous, jerky movements which can disturb your baby and wake them up). Wrap baby in a muslin sheet or a soft shawl in winter. Gradually wrap more loosely and discard the wrap as this reflex disappears (around 3 months).

3. INTRODUCE BEDTIME ROUTINES

Specific bedtime routines act as cues that help babies wind down and become conditioned to fall asleep. Bathing babies regularly just before bedtime is an ideal signal that lets them know bedtime is approaching. Lullabies and sleepy-words (such as 'Ni-Ni time' or 'Bye-byes') also help babies form bedtime associations.

4. BABY MASSAGE

Research conducted at Miami University showed that infants who were massaged daily for one month, fifteen minutes prior to bedtime, fell asleep more easily by the end of the study. In addition to enhancing neurological and physical development, massage reduces stress hormones and encourages positive relaxation hormones that help babies settle more easily.

5. ROCKING

Carrying babies in a sling, getting them used to the motion of a rocking chair, or a special-purpose baby hammock can help lull babies to sleep. However, some child-care professionals believe that this is putting too much emphasis on the parent getting the child to sleep, and advise that babies should be put to bed when drowsy and encouraged to develop their own sleep self-reliance. Use your own discretion.

6. HELP BABY LEARN DAY FROM NIGHT

Teach babies the difference between day and night by keeping the lights low and attending to her quietly during night feeds. Reserve active play and chatter for daytime.



7. NIGHT MUSIC

Repetitive sounds and calming lullaby music helps your baby recall the sounds she heard in the womb before birth. Music which incorporates sounds like the rhythm of the maternal heartbeat and womb sounds can act as great soothing aids.

8. SMART NIGHT NAPPY CHANGES

You can avoid babies waking up more than they need to during night feeds by changing nappies either before or half-way through a feed, rather than at the end when they are sleepy and full.

9. LAST FEED

When it's time for you to go to bed, you might try offering baby a top-up feed, which may enable her sleep pattern to more easily coincide with yours.

10. PHONES

Turn them off!

See also 'Helping Baby Sleep ' resource

Want more information?

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline

Free 24hr service, providing information and advice on breast feeding, sleeping, nutrition.
Phone: 1800 882 436.
www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au

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

Raising Children

The Australian Parenting Website
<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

Beyond Blue

Phone 1300 22 4636
Phone and online support if you are feeling low
www.beyondblue.org.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

Goonellabah Child & Family Health Service

Phone 02 6625 0111
9am – 4:30pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.

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

Family Care Centre Newborn Assistance

Support with unsettled behaviour, sleeping, feeding, postnatal distress. Referral required from Doctor/Child and Family health nurse.
Phone: 02 6622 8705