

Teach Your Baby To Sleep Properly

YOUR BABY

Teach Your Baby To Sleep Properly

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Introduction



You will face many issues as a parent but undoubtedly sleep is likely to be one of the most important and will probably be fairly near the top of your list, at least for the first few years anyway.

Your child sleeping through the night is a hurdle that most every parent eagerly anticipates. However, achieving this milestone is not as predictable as other developmental achievements such as smiling, teething, sitting up or starting to eat solids.

Initially, you will wonder whether your new baby will be a good sleeper. You will, no doubt, have discussed sleep with friends or relatives you know who already have babies or toddlers and you will most likely have heard stories of how their children were sleeping through the night after just a few weeks, or perhaps what a 'nightmare' some of them have had getting their babies and toddlers to sleep at night. Little wonder then that you will look upon this subject with some trepidation.

Do not panic, though. By getting off to the right start and, as the old saying goes 'starting as you mean to go on', you can, with the help of a few tried and tested

tactics, have your baby sleeping beautifully with amazing speed and ease.

The main thing to bear in mind is that the sooner you establish a bedtime routine, the better for you and your baby.

If you establish a set pattern as soon as your baby is as young as 4-8 weeks old he will learn quickly through your consistent and predictable routine. He will be relaxed and happy, secure in the knowledge that he knows what is going to happen next. It goes without saying that the more comfortable and relaxed your baby is the more likely he is to welcome his bed and drop off to sleep quickly and easily.

How Do Babies Sleep?



Are A Baby's Sleep Patterns Different From Mine?

Babies sleep a lot! Unfortunately, however, they don't always sleep when you want them to. While it does take a little time for a baby's sleep pattern to settle into a regular rhythm, you can help things along by gaining a better understanding of your infant's sleep pattern and learning as much as you can about it as soon as possible. In this way you will be better equipped to ward off any potential pitfalls at a later date. To get a feel for your baby's sleep cycle a good idea is to keep track of when she's actually asleep and awake by knocking up a simple, home-made chart either on your computer or by hand.

How Much Sleep Do Babies Need?

Generally newborn babies sleep between 16 and 18 hours a day.

Will I Be Able To Get My Baby To Sleep Through The Night?

You are probably thinking that 16-18 hours is quite a broad range and yes, it is. A lot, however, depends on your infant's development and, of course, YOUR behavior! Yes, you can contribute a great deal to establishing your baby's sleeping routine. Encouraging him to meet that sleeping-through-the-night target sooner rather than later is essential and to do so it is vital that you can establish healthy sleep habits from the word GO. Things will be a great deal easier for you and for your baby if you follow a consistent bedtime routine, provide your baby with a sleep aid such as a transitional object and establish a comforting bedtime ritual.

What you include in your ritual is entirely up to what suits you and your baby. It is important, though, that you choose something that helps relax and soothe your baby

rather than making her excited and lively This is particularly relevant in my case - my husband got into the habit of arriving home at night from work and, because he hadn't seen his son all day proceeded to tickle and play with him, getting him all excited just before he was going to bed!! Grrr!.

Many parents like to start their ritual in the bathroom or the living room but wherever suits you, it advisable to end it in your baby's bedroom. That your baby's bedroom is a nice, relaxing place to be is important for your baby to learn. He should not just associate it with being the place that he is left alone at bedtime. If your baby does get upset when you leave the bedroom, assure her that you will back in a few moments to check on her - the chances are that she will be sound asleep when you do.

So, from the time your baby is born, you would be best advised to start easing him into healthy and soothing sleep habits that will, for the most part, last a lifetime. Of course, you are going to hit a few glitches along the way, but if you start with the basics and stick to them, the chances of your child developing into a 'good sleeper' will be much higher.

In the following chapters, I hope you will enjoy and find useful the 'sleep' discussion and suggestions pertaining to the various stages of your baby's development.

0 – 3 Months



Typical Sleep Patterns of Newborns

As you will now be aware, most babies spend the majority of their first few weeks sleeping (about 16-18 hours a day for the initial few weeks and 14/15-hours a day by the time they are three-months-old). Typically, though, they almost never sleep for much more than three to four hours at a stretch and this includes both daytime and night-time during the first few weeks. Obviously, this does vary from baby to baby but what is fairly clear is that you will certainly not be clocking up much uninterrupted sleep yourself either! You will be on feeding and changing duties at night and the daytime will consist of more of the same plus playtime. Although some babies sleep right through the night as early as six-weeks, most do not manage this until they are five or six-months-old. You can help your baby get there sooner by teaching him good sleep habits from the start.

Developing Healthy Sleeping Habits

Learn to Recognise the Signs that He is Tired.

In the initial six to eight-weeks, your baby will not be able to stay awake for much more than two hours at a time. He may experience trouble falling asleep if you wait much longer than this to put him to bed as he will become overtired. You should watch your baby for hints and signs that he is ready for sleep. Is he rubbing his eyes, fretting, pulling on his ears or nose, or developing faint darkish circles under his eyes? If you can see any of these signs of sleepiness, you should get him straight to his cot/crib/moses basket. Don't worry - it all sounds very daunting and you may be doubting the fact that you will be able to spot these signs. This is perfectly natural but I can assure you that you will develop a kind of sixth sense with regard to your baby's daily patterns in no time at all. You will begin to know instinctively when he's ready for a nap.

Teaching Your Baby to Distinguish Between Night and Day

You may well have noticed during your pregnancy that your baby was more active at certain times of the day or night than others. I know when I was carrying my first son he always seemed to want to have a kick about just as I wanted to go to bed and kept me awake for hours!! This activity quite often continues after your child is born and for the first few days you won't be able to do very much about it. However, once your baby is about two-weeks-old you can begin to teach him to distinguish between night and day. During the day when he is awake and alert, play with him and chat and sing to him as much as you can. You should not worry about minimising noise from the television or radio. Nor should you worry about bright lights. If your baby likes to drop off during his feed, wake him up. During the night, you should reverse the daytime mode, do not play with him, talk to him too much or be too animated when he wakes for a feed. He should then begin to learn that daytime is for playing and night-time is for sleeping.

Try to Let Him Fall Asleep On His Own

At about six to eight-weeks you should start giving your baby a chance to fall asleep on his own by putting him to bed when he appears sleepy but is still in fact awake. It is best to avoid nursing or rocking your baby at this young age. It is common to think that what you do at this young age does not really have an effect it actually does. Your baby is learning his sleep habits and if you nurse and rock him to sleep regularly every night for the first couple of months he is going to grow to expect this constantly and be very distressed when you try to withdraw this method (you will probably feel pretty upset too, no doubt).

SUMMARY: Typical Sleep 0-3 Months

Hopefully, by now your nights of getting up every two to four hours are over (fingers crossed!). By three or four months, most babies are sleeping 14 or 15 hours in a 24-hour period and nine or ten of those hours are at night. Hooray! The rest are divided between several daytime naps. This number of daytime naps should fall to about two towards the end of your baby's first year. Although you may still be getting up for night-time feeds initially, by the time your baby is six-months-old, he should be capable physically of sleeping right through the night. Whether he actually will, of course, depends on whether he has learned good sleep habits.

3 – 6 Months



Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits?

At the age of 3-6 months the best things you can do to ensure that your baby is learning healthy sleep habits are as follows:

Set Bedtime and Nap times and Stick to Them

When your child was a newborn baby, determining when to put him in her bed for the night predominantly involved watching for signs of sleepiness (eye-rubbing, tetchiness etc.). Now that he's a little older, you should establish a specific bedtime routine, as well as consistent nap times, to regulate his sleep patterns. An ideal time for bedtime is usually somewhere between 7 and 8:30 p.m. If you leave it any later he is more likely to be over-tired and have difficulty falling asleep. You should set nap times in the

same way you set bedtimes and plan them for a certain time each day. Or try putting

him in his bed, say, two hours after he last woke up. Just as long as your baby is getting enough sleep, either method will work well.

Start to Develop a Bedtime Routine

Now is a good time to start a bedtime routine, if you haven't already done this. Your routine can include bathing your baby, getting him changed into his PJs, reading him a bedtime story or singing to him and giving him a kiss and cuddle. Your routine can include any or all of these. Whatever ritual works for you is fine but it is important that you do it in the same order and at the same time every night. Your baby thrives on consistency and routine - plus it will make things much easier for you.

Set Your Baby's Daily Clock

If your baby sleeps past his usual wake-up time it is perfectly alright to wake him in the morning. This will help to set his daily clock. He really needs to get into a regular sleep and wake pattern and recharge his batteries with regular naps during the day. If you make sure he is awake at the same time every morning you will be able to keep his naps and bedtime on target.

Possible Pitfalls

Waking in the night and developing negative associations with sleep affects both newborns and older babies. e.g. when your baby learns to depend on something like talking, singing, rocking or nursing to fall asleep. Now is the perfect age to start encouraging your child to fall asleep on his own. All babies wake naturally between 2 and 6 times during the night and when your child does, he will be able to get himself back off to sleep on his own without needing you to aid him. If he's been soothed to sleep by your arms, bottle or breast, he will need the same soother several times during the night to get him back to sleep again. If you put your baby to bed drowsy but awake he will almost certainly get himself off to sleep.

If your baby is having a hard time getting to sleep or staying asleep at night or at nap times, he may be overtired. Remember, if you wait too long to put your baby to bed, he may have a hard time dropping off.

6 – 9 Months



Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits

At this age, babies need about 14 to 15 hours of sleep per day and are can sleep for long stretches at a time. If your baby sleeps right through the night, he's almost certainly waking up very briefly but has cleverly worked out how to get himself back off to sleep. This, of course, is a fantastic sign that you are going to raise a good sleeper. With regard to daytime naps, your baby is probably at about two 1 and a half to two hour naps a day (usually one in the morning and one in the afternoon). This is only an average so do not be too concerned if he still takes three naps a day. As long as you are sticking to your bedtime and nap time routines and being consistent, you are on the right road to regulating his sleeping patterns. Below are some of the best things you can do to make sure your child is learning the right sleep habits:

Establish Bedtime Routine and Stick to It

By now you have probably already set up some sort of bedtime ritual, (bath time, PJs, story or song) and now you will notice that your child is starting to actively participate in this ritual. As long as your routine is carried out daily and at the same times every day, your baby will be very used to the routine and will be benefiting from the consistency.

Keep Your Baby's Daily Bedtime & Nap Routine

Set times for bedtime and naps are something that both you and your baby will benefit from. However, this does not mean that, for example, your baby should have his lunch at exactly 12:05 every lunchtime. It does mean, though, that in general, you should do your very best to stick to a predictable routine. When your baby eats, plays, takes naps and gets ready for bedtime at around the same time every day he will be much more likely to fall asleep quicker and more easily.

Falling Asleep Without Help

As previously discussed, your baby needs to learn to fall asleep by herself. Put her to bed before she nods off, trying not to let her get used to using nursing or rocking to fall asleep. If she cries, most experts advise waiting at least a few minutes to see if she is really upset.

Possible Pitfalls

Occasionally, babies who have never really had sleep problems may suddenly start waking up in the night or have difficulty falling asleep at this age. Disturbance of sleep often coincides with separation anxiety and reaching major milestones in motor and cognitive development. By now your baby will be learning to sit up, roll over, crawl, and some may even be trying to pull up into a standing position. As she is probably practising these skills over and over she will probably be very excited about practising them when she wakes in the night - trying to sit up or rolling over! This will all be very exciting to her.

However, if she gets over-excited or perhaps cannot roll back over again, she will not be able to get herself back to sleep and will probably start crying for you. Thus, if she is stuck sitting up, you will need to teach her how to lie down from there. It will probably take you about a week or so for you to help her practice getting "unstuck". You do not need to necessarily do this in her cot but wherever you spend time together. Making it a game is always fun. You could try sitting her up and helping her lie down from this position, or stand her up and teach her to lie down from this position. Give her lots of encouragement to do this on her own.

Another tip you might like to try if your child is waking in the night is to bring her bedtime forward by, say, half an hour. This usually works.

9 – 12 Months



Typical Sleep at this Age

Your baby is probably sleeping about 11 to 12 hours at night and napping about twice a day for one or two hours at a time by now. Making sure he's getting enough sleep is very important to his development so it is vital that you try to stick to a consistent nap routine too. If you slip-up on the nap schedule, you may well have more some trouble getting him to sleep at night and he may start to wake up more often.

Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits

This is the time to continue working on the techniques you and your baby learned in months 6 to 9 including:

Sticking to a Regular & Consistent Bedtime Schedule

I am repeating myself now, aren't I? However, I cannot stress this enough. Both you and your baby will benefit enormously from a nightly bedtime ritual. Whatever your chosen rituals, by making sure you follow the same routine every night your baby will be thriving on the consistency and feeling secure in the knowledge that he knows what to expect. Don't forget to ensure that your baby finds the rituals soothing and relaxing. e.g. if your baby hates bathing then there is no point using this as part of your bedtime routine, as he will get very worked up and will be far from relaxed when you put him to bed. Why not try bathing him earlier on in the day and perhaps include something else in your routine.

A Regular Schedule, Nap times & Bedtime

Your bedtime schedule will also go more smoothly if you try to keep the rest of your baby's daily schedule consistent. If he eats, plays, naps and starts his bedtime routine at around about the same time every day your baby will be much more likely to fall asleep easily, relaxed and without any problems.

Falling Asleep By Himself

That your baby has plenty of opportunities to fall asleep by himself is vitally important. As previously discussed, if he has to be rocked or nursed he will be more likely to cry when he wakes up in the night and need your assistance to go back off to sleep again.

Possible Pitfalls

At about five or six months your baby will start reaching some important developmental milestones e.g. sitting, rolling over, possibly crawling, pulling himself upright and even learning to walk. Whilst refining and expanding on these skills it may well be that he gets too excited to fall asleep at bedtime or he may even wake up at night to practice. If he is unable to soothe himself back to sleep he will end up crying for your attention. This quick burst in development should not be confused with a growth spurt. Thus feeding your baby during the night will not help him sleep better. It may actually make the problem worse and prolong things.

Your baby may also waking up during the night due to separation anxiety. He is missing you when you are not there and is worried that you are not coming back. He is likely to calm down as soon as you go into his room and speak to him quietly.

12- 18 Months



Typical Sleep at this Age

Your baby is now officially a toddler. However, he still needs as much sleep as he did when he was younger. Until he is two-years-old he should get around about 14 hours of sleep a day - this is about 11 hours at night and the remainder should come in the form of nap times during the day. He will still probably need two naps at 12 months but by the time he is about 18 months old, he will probably be ready for one nap of about an hour and a half to three hours. He will probably follow this pattern until he is about four or five-years-old. Changing from two naps to one can often be fairly difficult. A tip would be to try alternating so that you have, day, one nap one day and two naps the next. Obviously this will depend on how much sleep your child had the night before. You could also try putting him to bed a little earlier on the one-nap days.

Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits

By now, your baby's sleep habits should be well established. However, there may be fresh issues such as resistance to bedtime which tends to occur between 18-months and three-years-old. If this does occur, the best way forwards would be to continue the routine and strategies you have been practising since your child was six-months-old.

Nightly Bedtime Ritual

A regular nightly bedtime routine will assist your child in winding down at the end of the day and help him to get ready for sleep. He will probably have excess energy from the day so it is perfectly fine to let him run around for a little while and then move on

to a bath, a quiet game or something calming. You should try to follow the same routine every night and especially when you are away from home. Like babies, toddlers too thrive on consistency and routine. They are much happier when they can when and how things are going to happen - this helps them to feel in control.

Consistent Daily, Bedtime & Nap time Schedules

Setting and sticking to bed and nap times is a very important part of your daily schedule. If your toddler eats, plays, naps and goes to bed at about the same time every day he will be much more likely to go to bed and fall asleep without a struggle.

Falling Asleep By Himself

It is more important than ever that your toddler falls asleep by himself every night. He should not depend on nursing or rocking to get him off to sleep. If you do this he will never learn to settle himself back down when he wakes up at night. This will also be a rod for your back too as if he does wake up he will more often than not cry for your attention.

Possible Pitfalls

At this age your child may have difficulties in falling asleep or he may wake up often at night. Your toddler is again reaching new developmental milestones including walking. He will be really excited by his new skills and will want to keep practicing over and over, even if you say it's bedtime!

If he resists going to sleep, most experts advise leaving him in his cot for a few minutes to see whether he will calm down. It's fine to go in and check on or comfort him. However, if he wants you to stay and play with him it would be best to gently remind him that night-time is for sleep.

18 - 24 Months



Typical Sleep at this Age

Your toddler should be sleeping around about 11 to 12 hours at night and taking one one and a half-hour to three-hour afternoon nap every day. Some children may still prefer two shorter daily naps until their second birthday. If your toddler prefers this, don't worry and don't fight it.

Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits

AT 18-24 months below are some of the best things you can do to make sure your child's sleep habits are on the right track:

Falling Asleep on His Own

Without being rocked or nursed, your toddler should now be going off to sleep on his own at night. If he learns to depend on external cues he won't be able to fall back to sleep during the night when he wakes up and they are not there. To help prevent this, try to get him to bed when he's sleepy but still awake, so he can fall asleep by himself.

Offer Acceptable Choices

Your toddler will now be testing the limits of his newfound independence and experimenting with asserting control over the world around him. Don't allow yourself to be drawn into bedtime power struggles. Instead, allow your child make choices if possible during his night-time ritual. He could perhaps choose which bedtime story you read, or which PJs he will wear to bed. It is important to only offer him two or three choices.

Potential Pitfalls

The most common sleep problems for toddlers of all ages are difficulty in getting off to sleep and wake up at night frequently.

Also at this age, some children begin to climb out of their cots. Of course there is a potential for danger here. However, just because your child can get out of his cot, it does not mean that he is necessarily ready for a big bed. You should try to keep him safe and stationary with the following tips:-

Lower the mattress: Move the cot mattress to its lowest position.

Empty the cot: Your child may be using his toys or cot bumpers as steps to help him climb out. If you remove them, he may stay put a little longer.

Don't make getting out an attractive prospect: If your child gets out of his cot and your reaction is lots of attention or letting him get in to your bed, then he will keep doing this. You should try to stay calm, quiet and neutral and tell him firmly that he should not climb out and take him back to his cot. It will not be long before he gets the idea!

Keep watch: Stand where you can see his cot but he cannot see you. When you see him trying to climb out, immediately tell him not to. Once you have done this a few times, you will probably have cracked it!

Consider a cot tent: Cot tents are available both on the High Street and on the Internet. I am not a great lover of these but they are safe and are a great solution if all else fails. They attach to the cot rails with Velcro and keep your toddler safe inside.

Set up a safe environment: If you cannot prevent your child from climbing from his cot then you can make sure he is safe by putting pillows and/or other padding on the floor around the cot and on toy chests, dressers, drawers and other things that could he could knock himself on. You could also try lowering the cot rail and leaving a child-step next to the cot. At least then you won't have to worry about him falling and hurting himself.

24- 36 Months



Typical sleep at this age

Between the ages of two and three, toddlers need around about 11 to 12 hours of sleep a night and one hour and a half to two-hour nap each day. Most children this age go to bed sometime between 7 and 9 p.m. and get up between 6:30 and 8 a.m. You may be finding that your toddlers sleep patterns finally resemble yours. However, he will spend more time than you do in REM sleep (lighter sleep phase) This means that because he will be making frequent transitions between one sleep phase and the other, he will wake up more often than you do. This is why it is important that he has learned to get himself back off to sleep.

Establishing healthy sleep habits

Now that your child is getting older, you can try a few new ideas and tips to help him get a good night's sleep, including:

Moving into a Big Bed and Staying Put

Your child is likely to make the transition from cot to bed at this age. This will most probably be because he has outgrown his cot. Equally, the arrival of a new baby brother or sister can also prompt this decision. If you are pregnant it might be wise to

consider moving your toddler at least two to three months before your due date so that you have time to get him settled before he sees the new baby 'taking over' his cot. However, if the changeover does not go well, it is fine to leave it later, perhaps when the new baby is three or weeks months old as your new baby may spend the initial months sleeping in a moses basket or bassinet anyway. Your toddler will then have time to get used to have a new sister or brother and it will make the transition easier.

Other reasons to consider moving your toddler from cot to bed include frequent jumping out and potty training as your child may need to get out of bed at night to go to the bathroom.

When he is using his new bed, don't forget to praise him when he stays there at bedtime and through the night. Your child may start getting in and out of his bed over and over after the confinement of his cot, just because he can. If he does get up, firmly take him back to bed and tell him that it's time to go to sleep - then leave.

Anticipating & Incorporating All His Needs into Your Routine

You may find that your toddler tries to put off bedtime by wheedling for just five more minutes or just one more story, drink etc. You can try to anticipate all of your child's usual (and, of course, reasonable) needs and requests and make them part of your bedtime ritual. You can then allow him one extra request. However you should make it clear that one is the limit. He will feel like he's getting his own way but really you will be getting yours. Smiling faces all round!

Extra Goodnight-Kisses or Tuck-in

A nice idea is to promise your child an extra goodnight kiss after you have tucked him in. You could tell him that you will return in a few minutes to do this. In all probability he will be sound asleep when you go back.

Possible Pitfalls

Your toddler may start getting out of bed once he is in his new 'big bed'. It is best if your toddler starts getting up more often once he graduates to a big bed, tuck him back in firmly and say goodnight.

Experts' opinions vary on other ways to deal with this. Some insist you should not molly-coddle him or bring him into your bed; some say that as long as your child is falling asleep on his own, it's fine to go in and soothe him; others suggest going to your child immediately, finding the source of the problem and comforting him. You should try whichever you and your child are happiest with.

Another common sleep problem at this age is bedtime resistance. To avoid the problem, or at least make it easier you can try second-guessing and managing your child's pre-bed requests. It might be a comfort to know that few toddlers skip happily to bed each night, so it is best to be prepared for at least a few struggles!

Your toddler might have developed some new night-time worries at this stage such as being scared of the dark, monsters under the bed and indeed separation from you.

These fears are all common and part of a child's normal development. Obviously, if he starts having nightmares then you should go to him right away and talk to him about his bad dream while you soothe him. If these bad dreams continue, try looking for reasons for his anxiety in daily life.

Sleep Phases



We all experience two distinct sleep phases a) rapid eye movement (or REM) sleep, when we actively dream; b) non-REM sleep which consists of four phases: drowsiness, light sleep, deep sleep, and very deep sleep.

You may have noticed that from drowsiness to deep sleep, your baby becomes less and less active, her breathing slows and she becomes very quiet, so that in deepest sleep she is virtually motionless.

Initially, your baby will probably sleep about 14-15 hours a day. These hours will be divided into three or four naps evenly spaced between feedings. Each of these sleep periods includes fairly equal amounts of REM and non-REM sleep, which are organised thus:

1. Drowsiness, 2. REM sleep, 3. Light sleep, 4. Deep sleep, 5. Very deep sleep.

As she grows older, your baby will cycle through all the non-REM phases before entering REM sleep, exactly the same as adults do. By the age of three, only one-third or less of total sleep time is spent in REM sleep.

Phase	Baby Behaviour
Deep Sleep	Lies quietly without moving
Light Sleep	Moves while sleep; jumps/startles at noise
Drowsiness	Eyes start to close; may doze
Quiet alert	Eyes open wide, face is bright; body is quiet
Active alert	Face and body move actively
Crying	Cries, perhaps screams; body moves in very disorganized ways

Suggested Bedtime Routines



The following bedtime rituals are some tried and tested routine ideas. I hope you will find something here that's right for you. And remember, a bedtime ritual is not just good for your baby, but you too! It's a special time set aside for you to spend with your baby, something you can plan on.

GIVE HIM A BATH

Probably the most popular part of many bedtime rituals is bath time. Soaking in lovely warm water is a soothing experience and getting your baby clean, warm and dry is a great way to soothe her into bedtime. A bath is also a wonderful way for your partner to spend some special time with the baby. This is especially true if you are breastfeeding and your partner cannot help out very much with mealtimes. My husband used to take our son in the bath with him every night and they both had a wonderful time! However, do beware that your baby does not get too excited during baths. Many mothers will find that their child does not enjoy bathing. In either case, bathing can be left out of the bedtime ritual and done at an earlier stage in the day.

PLAYING GAMES

Playing a quiet game in your baby's bedroom or the living room is a lovely way to spend some fun time with her before bedtime. It does not have to be an elaborate game, something simple like peek-a-boo behind your hand or a toy is fine - as long as your baby does not get over-excited.

A MAD HALF-HOUR

With some babies, it is helpful to let your baby get any pent-up energy out of her system before you try to settle her down for the night. If she is in the mood a bounce in her bouncer or a swinging game is great. It is important, though, to follow any rowdy play with something calmer and quieter — like a bath or story — before she goes to sleep.

CHIT-CHAT

Bedtime is the perfect opportunity for parents to spend some time talking to their baby. You don't have to wait until your baby's old enough to hold a conversation with. You can just sit in a chair and have a little chat about your baby's day and it will probably relax him.

CLEANING UP

Your child's getting-ready-for-bed routine can include washing her hands and face, brushing her teeth (or wiping her gums, a nappy change and getting into her PJs. It's very important to start the habit of teeth brushing at a young age so your baby gets used to it.

GOODNIGHT EVERYONE (AND EVERYTHING!)

My son used to enjoy being carried around the room by his dad and saying goodnight to his favourite toys, people, and other objects.

BEDDY-BYE STORY

One of the other most popular bedtime rituals is the bedtime story. The great thing is your will baby learn to recognize new words (studies have shown that language skills and even intelligence can depend on a baby's daily exposure to a large vocabulary).

SOOTHING MUSIC

Another nice idea is to put on a CD or tape of lullabies, classical music, or other favourite childrens tunes while you settle your baby to sleep. You can even leave the music on after you leave the room. This can help ease her transition from

wakefulness and falling asleep. Sound machines are also great for soothing babies, drowning out outside noise. Beware, though, that your baby does not become too dependent on the music, though. She needs to learn to fall asleep on her own as a result of learning good sleep habits rather than depending on any special noises or gimmicks.

SING-A-LONG-A-LULLABYE

Singing a lullaby is a age-old way to help a sleepy baby drift off. Her favourite sound in the whole world is your voice and the soft, soothing melody can calm her. If you can't remember the words or tune to your favorite songs [click here](#).

30 Ways To Get Your Baby To Sleep



Here are some tried and tested, proven attitudes and techniques for getting your child to sleep and keeping him asleep. Most of these are applicable to infants and toddlers of all ages.

1. Try to develop a realistic attitude about getting your child to sleep. Sleeping, like eating, is not a state you can force a baby into. The best you can do is to create a secure environment that allows sleep to overtake your baby. A realistic long-term goal is to help your baby develop a healthy attitude about sleep - that sleep is a pleasant state to enter and a secure state to remain in. Many sleep problems in older children and adults stem from children growing up with an unhealthy attitude about sleep. To many, that sleep was not a particularly pleasant state to enter and was a frightening state to remain in. Night-time parenting is a long-term investment. If you teach your baby a restful attitude about sleep when they are young, both you and your children will sleep better when they are older.

2. Beware of sleep trainers - they command a high price tag and possible risks. Most of these sleep-training techniques are just variations of the old cry-it-out method. Technology has found its way into the baby's bedroom too. Tired parents are induced to buy a variety of sleep-inducing gadgets designed to lull a baby off to sleep alone in her cot. Oscillating or swinging cradles, cot vibrators that recreate a car ride and teddy bears that "breathe" are just a few. Most of these `gadgets promise to take the parents place when it comes to night duty. It is fair to say that not all sleep trainers

are to be ignored. However, you need to be discerning.

Don't try to change your baby. If your present daytime or nighttime routine is not working for you, think about what changes you can make in yourself and your lifestyle that will make it easier for you to meet your baby's needs. You may well be able to control your own reactions to a situation but you cannot control how your baby reacts. Be discerning about advice that promises instant results. After all the last thing you want to do is lose your baby's trust trying out a method that your baby hates and you are not really comfortable about using from the outset. Trust yourself, you will become an expert in your baby.

3. Stay flexible. No single approach will work with all babies all the time or even all the time with the same baby. Don't persist with a failing experiment. If the sleep routine that you are following does not work for your family don't persist. Develop a night-time routine that works for you. All babies have different night-time temperaments and families have varied lifestyles. Keep working at a night-time routine that fits the temperament of your baby and your own lifestyle. If it's working, stick with it. If it's not, be open to trying other things. You should also be prepared for one type of routine to work at one stage of your child's an life, yet need a change as she enters another stage. Be open to trying different approaches. Follow your heart and you and your baby will eventually work out the right bedtime routine for you and your family.

4. Decide where baby sleeps best. There is no right or wrong place for babies to sleep. Wherever all family members sleep the best is the right arrangement for you and your baby. Some babies sleep best in their own cot in their bedroom, some sleep better in a cot in their parents' bedroom. Other babies sleep best snuggled right next to you and your partner in your bed. There are many any parents that prefer a co-sleeping arrangement. I did with my first son and loved him sleeping with me, though it did take my husband a while to get used to it - initially he was paranoid that he would roll and squash the baby. In reality, most parents use various sleeping arrangements at various stages during their child's couple of years. Always be open to changing styles as baby's developmental needs and your family situation changes.

5. Get your baby used to a variety of sleep associations. The way your baby goes to sleep at night is the way she expects to go back to sleep when she awakens. So if your baby is always rocked or nursed to sleep, she will expect to be rocked or nursed back to sleep. Sometimes nurse her off to sleep, sometimes rock her off to sleep, sometimes sing her off to sleep, and sometimes use tape recordings. There are two schools of thought on the best way to put babies to sleep: the parent-soothing method and the self-soothing method. Both have advantages and possible disadvantages.

Parent-soothing method. When your baby is ready to sleep you help to make a comfortable, relaxed and soothing transition from being awake to falling asleep, usually by nursing, rocking, singing, or whatever comforting techniques work.

Advantages

- a) Your Baby learns a healthy sleep attitude – that sleep is a pleasant state to enter and a secure state to remain in.
- b) Creates fond memories about being lulled to sleep.
- c) Builds parent-infant trust

Disadvantages

Because of the concept of sleep associations, your baby learns to rely on an outside prop to get to sleep, so when he wakes up he will expect help to get back to sleep. You, your partner or both could end up totally exhausted!

Self-soothing method. Your baby is put to bed awake and goes to sleep by himself. Parents offer intermittent comforting but are not there when baby drops off to sleep.

Advantages

If your baby learns to go to sleep by himself, he may be better able to put himself back to sleep without parental help, because he doesn't associate going to sleep with parents comforting. Some parents consider this tough on their baby but it is eventually less exhausting for parents.

Disadvantages

Seldom works for high-need babies with persistent personalities

Overlooks medical reasons for night waking

Risks parents becoming less sensitive to baby's cries

Remember, in working out what suits you and your child, be sensitive to the night-time needs of your individual baby and remember your ultimate goal - to create a healthy sleep attitude in your baby and to get all family members a restful night's sleep.

6. Daytime mellowing. A peaceful, productive time during the day is more likely to lead to a restful night. The more attached you are to your baby during the day and the more baby is held and calmed during the day, the more likely this peacefulness is to carry through into the night. If your baby has a restless night, try to think back to unsettling things that may have occurred during the day: Are you too busy? Are the nursery or childminder the right match for your baby? Does your baby spend a lot of time being held by you or someone else? It is sometimes true to say that babies who are carried in baby slings for several hours a day settle better at night.

7. Set a predictable and consistent nap schedule. Try to pick out the times of the day that you yourself are most tired - perhaps 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. then lie down with your baby at these times every day for about a week to get your baby used to a daytime nap routine. This also sets you up to get some much-needed daytime rest rather than be tempted to scurry around vacuuming, washing and `getting things

done' while your baby is napping. Babies who have regular, consistent nap schedules during the day are more likely to get off to sleep easier and for longer stretches at night.

8. Consistent bedtimes and rituals. Babies who enjoy consistent and regular bedtimes and familiar bedtime rituals usually go to sleep easier and stay asleep longer. Of course, due to modern lifestyles consistent bedtimes are not always as possible or realistic, as they used to be. Many parents both have to work and often don't get home until six or seven o'clock at night, so it's common for babies and toddlers to miss out on their bedtime ritual. Parents often feel guilty and want to spend more time with their child and for many older babies this becomes prime time with their parents and they are going to milk it for all they can get. Within some families a later afternoon nap and a later bedtime is more much more practical.

9. Calming down. Give baby a warm bath followed by a soothing massage to relax tense muscles and busy minds. Be careful, though, as this can stimulate some babies.

10. Make sure your baby eats and drinks enough during the day. Your baby needs to learn that daytime is for eating and night-time is mostly for sleeping. Some older babies and toddlers can get so involved in playing during the day that they don't want to eat at mealtimes. They tend to try to make up for it during the night by waking frequently to feed. Try to stop this habit by feeding your baby at least every three hours during the day to cluster the baby's feedings during the waking hours. On your baby's first night waking, attempt a full feeding, otherwise some babies, especially breastfed infants, get in the habit of nibbling all night. This is not too bad if you are co-sleeping but can be exhausting if you are constantly to-ing and fro-ing between bedrooms.

11. Nursing. Some mothers like to nestle next to their baby and breastfeed or bottle feed him off to sleep. The smooth and loving continuation from warm bath, to warm arms, to warm breast, to warm bed is a recipe for sleep to soon follow.

12. Fathering down. For fathers, a lovely way to prepare your baby for bed is to place your baby in the neck nestle position (nestle baby's head against the front of the neck with your chin against the top of your baby's head. The vibration of the deeper male voice will lull your baby and make him drowsy for sleep) and rock your baby to sleep. Another nice method is to lie down with your baby, still in the neck nestle position, and let the baby reach his dozing state in this way.

13. Rocking or walking down. Try rocking baby to sleep in a bedside rocking chair, or walk with baby, patting her back and singing or praying.

14. Wearing down. Some babies are so active and lively during the day that they have trouble winding down at night. Try placing your baby in a baby sling and wear her around the house for a half-hour or so before the designated bedtime. When she is dozing in the sling, ease her out of the sling onto her bed. This is a great method for fathers too.

15. Swinging down. Wind-up swings for winding down babies are a great tool for parents who don't have the time, energy or creativity to muster up rituals of their own. Tired parents will pay anything for a good night's sleep and this is perfectly understandable. Once in a while a moving plastic seat may be more sleep inducing than a familiar pair of arms. Many high-need babies associate their parent's body with play and stimulation and will not drift off to sleep in a human swing. A mechanical one is far less stimulating, if not downright boring and, as such, can be a useful part of a sleep-ritual. However, it is important to remember, high-need babies can be quite resistant to mechanical mother substitutes and will usually protest anything less than their real mother! It might be an idea to borrow one for a week before actually going out and spending money on a swing. You may even discover that you are uncomfortable with mechanical mothering and decide to get more creative!

16. Driving down. If you've tried all the above transitioning techniques and your baby still does not want to go to sleep, try putting your baby in a car seat and drive around until she falls asleep. When you return home and she is in a deep sleep, carry the car seat (with the sleeping baby) into your bedroom and let baby remain in the car seat until the first night waking. If she is in a deep sleep you may be able to ease her out of the car seat into her own bed.

17. Mechanical mothers. Gadgets to put and keep baby asleep are becoming big business. It's all right to use these as relief when the main comforter wears out, but a steady diet of these artificial sleep inducers may be unhealthy.

Now that you've learned a few tricks to get your baby to sleep, here are some ways to keep your baby asleep.

18. Nighttime attire. Try various ways of swaddling your baby at night. In the early months, many babies like to "sleep tight," securely swaddled in a cotton baby blanket. Older infants like to sleep "loose," and may sleep longer stretches with loose coverings that allow them more freedom of movement. Quite often, dressing a baby loosely during the day, but swaddling him at night, conditions the baby to associate sleep with swaddling. A baby who gets too hot or too cold may become restless. Adjust the layering according to the temperature of the room and the sleep habits of your baby. Allergy-prone babies sleep better in 100 percent cotton sleepwear.

19. The sound of silence: Since most babies can block out disturbing noise, you don't have to create a noiseless sleeping environment, yet some babies startle and awaken

easily with sudden noises. Some people go as far as oiling the joints and springs of a squeaky cot, putting out the dog before he barks and turning the ringer off on the phone!

20. Darkness in the baby's room. Use opaque shades to block out the light, which may get you an extra hour of sleep if you have a baby that wakes up with the first ray of sunlight entering the bedroom.

21. Sounds to sleep by. Repetitive, nearly monotonous sounds that lull baby to sleep are known as white noise, such as the sounds of a fan, air conditioner, or even tape recordings of womb sounds or vacuum cleaner sounds. Also, try running water from a nearby faucet or shower, a bubbling fish tank, a loudly ticking clock, or a metronome set at sixty beats a minute. (These can all be tape-recorded.) Try music to sleep by, such as tape recordings of waterfalls or ocean sounds, or a medley of easy-listening lullabies on a continuous loop. These sleep-inducing sounds will remind your baby of the sounds she was used to hearing in the womb.

22. Soothing music and sounds. Try a tape recording of your baby's favorite lullabies, so when she awakens she can resettle herself to the familiar sleep-inducing sound of the music. You can make a medley of your own lullabies that have been proven sleep-inducers.

23. Leave a little bit of yourself. If your baby suffers from separation anxiety, try leaving a breast pad in the cradle, or play a tape recording of yourself singing a bedtime lullaby.

24. A full tummy. Stuffing your baby with cereal before bedtime seldom works, however, a tablespoon or two given to a baby over six months of age may get you an extra hour or two. Tiny babies have tiny tummies, a bit bigger than the size of their fist. So, your baby's digestive system was designed for small, frequent feedings, which is why, in the early months, babies feed at least every 3 to 4 hours at night and more often during the day.

25. Reduce physical discomforts.

a) Clear the nose. In the early months, babies need clear nasal passages to breathe. Later they can alternatively breathe through their mouth if their nose is blocked. Bedroom inhalant allergies are a common cause of stuffy noses and consequent night waking. Dust-free your baby's bedroom as much as possible. Try not to use fuzzy blankets, down comforters and dust-collecting fuzzy toys. If your baby is particularly allergy-prone, a HEPA-type air filter will help. The hum and buzz of an air filter will also be an extra bonus, acting as `white noise to lull your baby to sleep.

b) Relieve teething pain. Even though you may not yet be able to feel baby's teeth, teething discomfort may start as early as three months and continue on and off until the two-year molars appear. Tell tail clues include a wet bed sheet under your baby's head, a drool rash on his cheeks and chin, swollen and tender gums and perhaps a slight fever and a touch of diarrhoea (though many doctors deny this!). With your doctor's permission you should give appropriate doses of Calpol and/or Bonjela just before your baby goes to sleep and repeat in four hours if your baby wakes up.

c) Change wet or soiled nappies. Some babies are bothered by wet nappies at night though most are not. If your baby sleeps through wet nappies, there is no need to wake her up just to change her (if you are treating a persistent or nasty nappy-rash then, of course, you must give her a fresh nappy). Bowel movements obviously necessitate a change. If possible, try to change your baby's nappy just before a feeding, as he is quite likely to fall asleep during or after feeding. Some breastfed babies, however, have a bowel movement during or immediately after a feeding and will need changing again.

d) Remove irritating nightwear. Some babies cannot settle in synthetic sleepwear. Besides being restless, some babies show skin allergies to new clothing, detergents and fabric softeners by breaking out in a rash.

e) Remove airborne irritants. Environmental irritants may cause congested breathing passages and cause your baby to wake up. e.g cigarette smoke, baby talcum powder, paint fumes, hair spray, animal hair (keep animals out of an allergic child's bedroom), plants, clothing (especially wool), stuffed animals, dust from a bed canopy, feather pillows, blankets, and fuzzy toys that collect lint and dust. If your baby consistently awakens with a stuffy nose, suspect irritants or allergens in the bedroom.

26. A warm bed. Placing a warm baby onto cold sheets can cause trouble. Particularly during the Winter, use flannel sheets or place a warm towel on the sheets to warm them (don't forget to remove it before putting your baby on the warmed sheets).

27. The right temperature and humidity. A consistent bedroom temperature of around 70 degrees F is preferable. Also, a relative humidity of around 50 percent is most conducive to sleep. Dry air may leave your baby with a stuffy nose that wakes him up. Beware, though, because too high humidity can cause allergy-producing moulds. A warm-mist vaporizer in your baby's sleeping area helps maintain an adequate and consistent relative humidity, especially with central heating. Again, the 'white noise' of a consistent hum will lull your baby to sleep.

28. Hands first. Is your baby a born self-soother who awakens, whimpers, squirms, and then resettles by herself? Or is your baby, if not promptly attended to, one whose cries escalate and becomes angry and difficult to resettle? If you can get to your baby quickly before she completely awakens, you may be able to resettle her back to sleep with a firm laying on of hands. To add the finishing touch, pat your baby's back or bottom rhythmically to match your heartbeat. Remove your hands gradually – first one and then the other – easing the pressure slowly so as not to startle her awake.

Sometimes fathers, perhaps because they have larger hands, are more successful in this hands-on ritual - I know, much to my annoyance, my husband could always manage this miraculously and I never could!!

29. Let your partner have his share of night-time parenting. It is very important for babies to get used to their father's way of comforting and being put to sleep (and back to sleep) otherwise mothers burn out. A father's participation in night-time parenting is especially important for the breastfeeding infant who assumes that 'mum's cafe' is open all hours!

30. Hidden medical causes of night waking If you've tried all these techniques and your infant is still waking up frequently – and painfully – it is possible that there may be an underlying medical problem contributing to your baby's night waking One of the most common hidden medical causes of night waking (and colicky behavior) in babies is a condition known as gastro-oesophageal reflux (GER). Due to a weakness of a circular band of muscle where the oesophagus joins the stomach, irritating stomach acids are regurgitated into baby's oesophagus, causing pain - adults refer to a similar condition a heartburn. Clues that your baby may be suffering from GER are painful bursts of night waking, fussiness (particularly after eating), frequent spitting up (although not all babies with GER spit up regularly), frequent bouts of colicky, abdominal pain, frequent bouts of unexplained wheezing, throaty sounds after feeding.

Another hidden medical cause of night waking is allergies to formula or dairy products, either in milk-based formulas or in dairy products in a breastfeeding mother's diet. Clues that milk allergies may be causing night waking (and colicky behavior) are bloating, diarrhoea and a red rash around your baby's anus, in addition to many of the signs described above under GER. If your baby is not only waking up frequently, but waking up in pain, you should discuss these two medical possibilities with your doctor, since both can be diagnosed and treated, giving everyone in the family a more peaceful night's sleep.

Infant Sleep Training Methods



Three sleep training methods to try are:

The Crying-Down method

The Core Night method

The Controlled Crying method.

THE CRYING DOWN METHOD

This method can be particularly helpful when initial feeding problems have been resolved and a baby only has mild sleep association problems or has difficulty falling asleep because he is overtired or over-stimulated. The technique involves leaving your baby to cry, and although it's very difficult to listen to a young baby cry himself to sleep, it will prevent serious sleep problems in the future.

Crying down with a baby under six weeks usually lasts between five and 10 minutes, although with some babies who have become over-tired and fight sleep, it can last up to 20 minutes. If you find the crying hard to ignore try and wait for five to 10 minutes before going in to your baby.

You can then enter your baby's room and reassure him with a soothing touch or quiet voice. This should be kept to between one to two minutes before leaving him. You should then wait about 5-10 minutes before returning. Try to repeat this procedure until the baby learns to sleep by himself.

THE CORE NIGHT METHOD

The core night method can be used for a baby over six weeks, who weighs more than 4.6kg (10 lb), has fallen into a good daytime routine and is settling well in the evening, and provided he's putting on enough weight each week. You'll know it's the right time to start thinking about this method when your baby's still waking in the night looking for a feed but not feeding well at 7am.

The core night works on the principle that once a baby sleeps for one longer spell in the night over several nights, he shouldn't be fed again during the hours slept in the course of the core night. Once you've seen that your baby can last a certain length of time without a feed, you can use this opportunity to help him to sleep longer. If he wakes during these hours, he should be left for a few minutes to settle himself back to sleep.

If he doesn't settle, try patting him, offering him a dummy or a sip of water, giving him the minimum of attention. Babies over six weeks who are putting on a good amount of weight each week but who are still waking at 3am should be offered a dummy or a bottle of cool, boiled water. If your baby still won't settle, give him the smallest feed that gets him through until 7am.

THE CONTROLLED CRYING METHOD

If all other methods have failed, controlled crying is the most effective way to sleep-train babies over 6 months.

It is an intense technique and takes a lot of commitment and perseverance but can be very successful in getting your baby to sleep through. If your baby is still feeding in the night, however, it's a good idea to try the core night method to ensure he isn't crying from genuine hunger.

Start controlled crying in the evening on the first day. The same procedure should be carried out no matter how many times your baby or toddler wakes up in the night.

Day 1

Step 1: Decide on a regular time to start the bedtime routine and stick to it. Allow at least one hour for the bath, milk feed and settling.

Step 2: Settle your child in his bed before he gets too sleepy. Kiss him goodnight and leave the room.

Step 3: Allow a minimum of five to 10 minutes of crying before returning to reassure him. Reassurance should be kept to the minimum. You can stroke him or say 'ssh-ssh' softly, but resist the urge to pick him up. Leave the room after two minutes even if he continues to cry.

Step 4: After the first half hour of crying, the times between visits should be increased by five to 10 minutes each time, to 15-20 minutes between visits.

Step 5: Continue with the checking plan every 15-20 mins until your baby or toddler falls asleep. Reassurance should still be kept to a minimum of no more than two minutes and he shouldn't be lifted out of the cot.

Step 6: If your baby wakes in the night, continue to follow the same plan for the evening, gradually increasing the time between visits, until you are going in every 15-20 minutes.

Day 2

For daytime naps, it is important you start where you left off in the night.

Step 1: Wait at least 20 minutes before checking your baby and continue to keep visits to him to a maximum of two minutes, with the minimum of reassurance.

Step 2: If your baby or toddler falls asleep closer to the time he's meant to be getting up, allow 15 minutes in the morning nap and 45 minutes at the lunchtime nap so he won't end up sleeping after 3pm in the afternoon. If your baby's very tired he may need a short nap of 15-20 minutes late afternoon, so he doesn't become over-tired.

Step 3: Follow the same settling procedure as the first night in the evening, this time waiting 20-25 minutes before returning. During visits on the second night, reassure your baby by saying "ssh-ssh", but don't stroke or touch him.

Step 4: If your baby is still crying after the first hour, the time between visits should be increased to 35-40 minutes.

Step 5: If he wakes in the night, you should wait 45 minutes before checking him, and you shouldn't speak to him or stroke him. Reduce visits to one minute.

Day 3

By the third day, the majority of babies and toddlers will be settling themselves at all sleep-times within 20 minutes and there's no need to check on them.

Step 1 If your baby backtracks at one of the sleep-times and you have to go back to checking him, start off with looking in on him every 15-20 minutes and increase the interval until you are back to 45-50 minutes.

Step 2: Once your child has done a few days of settling within 20 minutes, you should

be able to use the crying-down method for getting him off to sleep.

What The Sleep Experts Say



While there is no single magical answer, there are two popular theories among leading paediatricians.

Richard Ferber, M.D., director of the Center for Pediatric Sleep Disorders at Boston's Children's Hospital, is widely recognized as the nation's leading authority on children's sleep problems. Dr. Ferber believes that bad sleep habits are learned and therefore can be unlearned. In his book, *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems*, Dr. Ferber outlines the "Delayed-Response" (also known as the "Cry-It-Out Method"). He also stresses the importance of developing good sleeping patterns and daily schedules to ensure that sleeping problems don't develop in the first place. He theorises that we all have our own associations with sleep; just as babies, too, come to associate certain behaviors, objects or situations with sleep. Adults also enter periods of light sleep, even awoken during the night, but we can fall back to sleep. Dr. Ferber believes it is important that babies learn to do this too.

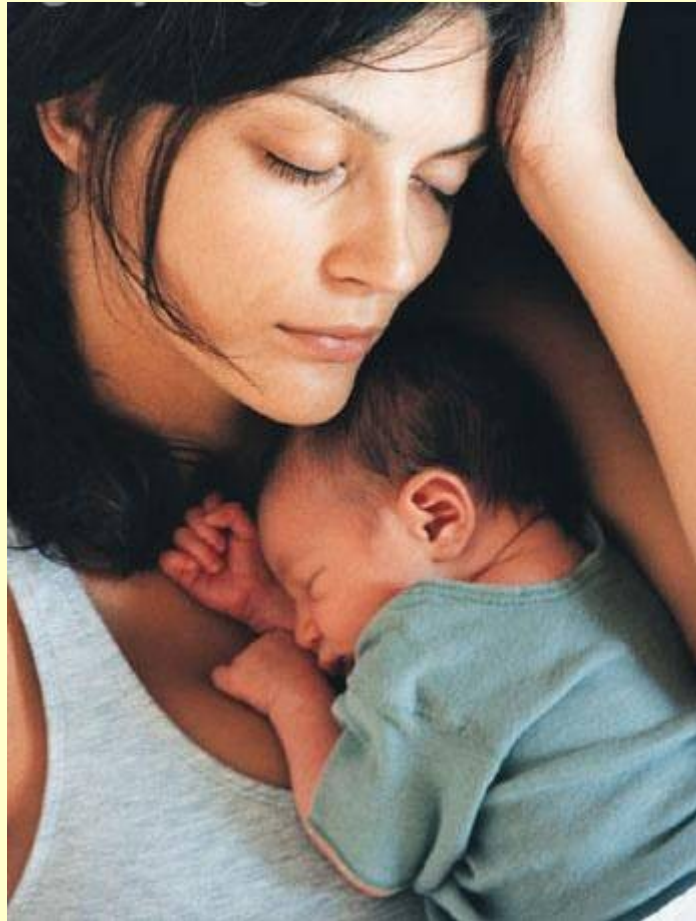
Another well known pediatrician, William Sears, M.D., best-known proponent of the family bed and author of *Nighttime Parenting, How to Get Your Baby or Child to Sleep*, believes that sleep sharing helps parents stay attuned to their baby's needs. *Nighttime Parenting* explains why babies sleep differently from adults and offers

solutions to nighttime problems.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) believes you should train your baby to go to sleep on her own and to comfort herself when she wakes up. The AAP believes that you can help her learn to distinguish between night and day right from the start by keeping nighttime feedings subdued. Eventually, she'll learn to save her long sleep for the night. The AAP recently published a guide for parents entitled, *Guide to Your Child's Sleep*.

Regardless of the approach, it's clear that there is no right or wrong solution for getting your baby to sleep. Ultimately, it is up to you to decide what is best for your you, your baby and indeed your family, to ensure that you all get a good night's sleep.

Help Me Make It Through The Night!



Coping with Sleepless Nights

Sleep deprivation can leave you disorientated, unable to concentrate, tearful and depressed. It causes a lot of stress and is recognised to be a factor in women developing postnatal depression. Sleep deprivation is often one of the biggest shocks for new parents. This type of tiredness can make you feel like you're losing your grip and affect your ability to concentrate.

Try to gain some comfort in the fact that it isn't going to last forever. You should try not to expect too much of yourself, you cannot do everything, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Try and get some help and take care of yourself by eating well, sleeping whenever you can, and taking some exercise, even if it is only a brisk walk with the pushchair. Never feel guilty if your house is untidy and you never seem to be able to get round to doing it all.

Tips to Help You Cope With Sleepless Nights

1. Do not try to be superwoman, you have not got anything to prove. Admit you need some help and your friends and relatives will only be too pleased to come and help, even to do the ironing!
2. Do try to grab a nap when you can. Even a quick 20 minutes' rest will give you a boost. If you find it difficult to sit down and relax, try smothering your hands with hand cream as that way you will have to take a break!
3. Do not miss out meals. Eat regularly and make sure you eat healthy meals. Try not to go down the sugar and caffeine route, it will not keep you going for long. Sugar rushes leave you drained of energy and this may affect your milk supply. If you are snacking try to opt for a sandwich made with wholemeal bread and a protein-based filling like chicken or egg, rather than reaching for the biscuit tin.
4. Do not cut yourself off from the outside world. It may be the last thing you feel like doing, but a walk in the fresh air will really perk you up. Phone a friend or meet up with someone from your antenatal class, surviving the first few weeks of parenthood together is a real bonding experience.
5. Let your partner take over some feeds. This can be difficult if you're breastfeeding but you can express milk and keep it in a sterile bottle in the fridge. Your partner could give the last feed of the evening which would give you the chance to have a soothing bath and an early night. Do not forget to make some time for yourself. A face pack, plucking your eyebrows, watching your favourite TV show or DVD or reading a favourite magazine or novel will give you some time out.
6. Do try to relax. Easier said than done, I know - but have a go. Try some of the relaxation techniques you learned in your antenatal class, 20 minutes' deep relaxation can be as refreshing as a whole night's sleep.

Possible Medical Problems



One of the reasons it is important to be cautious about insensitively using the cry-it-out method to get babies to sleep longer is that doctors and parents automatically assume that a night waking baby has bad sleeping habits and they miss underlying painful causes of night waking. You should suspect a medical cause for night waking if:

- a) baby awakens with sudden colicky-type abdominal pains
- b) a good sleeper suddenly becomes a restless sleeper
- c) baby has not slept well since birth
- d) there are other signs or symptoms of illness
- e) baby cries inconsolably
- f) your intuition tells you something is wrong
- g) no other cause is apparent

Here are the most common painful causes of night waking and which are often hidden because they are not as obvious as ear infections, teething, or urinary tract infections.

1. Gastro-oesophageal reflux (GER). such as an allergy to formula or to the cow's milk breastfeeding mothers drink. Suspect if baby is restless most of the night and is generally gassy.

3. Ear infections. Suspect an ear infection if baby has a yellow discharge coming from her nose and/or eyes.

4. Thread worms/pin worms. Suspect in the toddler or older child who is waking up with scratch marks around the anus, other family members have pin worms, or you see tiny, white, thread-like worms around baby's anus or in the bowel movements at night.

Infants who awaken frequently because of a medical cause are also more likely to be colicky and fussy during the day, but not necessarily. If you suspect a medical cause, consult your doctor and keep investigating until you find the cause and the treatment.

"Your Baby" Store

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