

# Sleep, Your Baby and You

## Guidelines on Best Sleep Practices for Newborns to Toddlers

From the National Sleep Foundation

The information you'll find here has been developed by a panel of leading experts in sleep and pediatrics, brought together by the National Sleep Foundation and supported by a grant from Johnson's®.

### A Good Night's Sleep for Your Baby and You

A great deal has been written about babies and sleep. No wonder. It's one of the biggest challenges new parents face. How well, and how much, your baby sleeps can play a big part in your experience of parenthood throughout the early months and years. It also affects your family's new life together, no matter whether your baby is your first or your fifth. These guidelines have been prepared—and are being shared—with one purpose in mind: to help you understand and work with your baby at each stage of development, so that long-term sleep patterns will evolve naturally as a partnership between you and your baby.

### Working Towards a Successful Sleep Partnership

The parent-baby partnership works best when you take your cues from your baby's natural sleep patterns and needs. But you, the parents, are the ones who determine how bedtime routines will evolve. Your baby learns from you. It's up to you to make sure that the routine is one you as parents can live with—both now and months, even years, from now.

### Sleep Essentials

#### *Pointers for Parents: Newborns to Toddlers*

- Every baby has a distinctive pattern of sleep and waking. As time passes, you'll see that these follow a natural and consistent rhythm throughout the 24-hour day.
- All babies have normal brief awakenings throughout the night.
- Sleep patterns affect a baby's behavior throughout the day—as well as your baby's health and development.
- A baby's sleep is affected by bedtime routines that parents establish.
- All kinds of outside influences can affect a baby's sleep habits, including illness, stress and any change in routine.
- Sleep patterns change with age and development.
- Parents (and older children) need sleep, too. Try to harmonize your sleep times with your baby's.

#### *Contact Your Doctor If:*

- Your child ever appears to have trouble breathing or is often a noisy breather.
- Your child has difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.
- Your child has unusual nighttime awakenings, or significant nighttime fears.
- Sleep problems are affecting your child's behavior
- Don't be afraid to contact your pediatrician any time you're concerned.

### What to Expect

#### Patterns to Watch For

Here are some guidelines on what to expect, from the time you bring your tightly swaddled bundle home to your baby's third birthday. Remember as you look at the following information:

Every child is different. Your baby's sleep habits will be different from your friend's baby, or from an older sibling at the same age.

Build your routines and rhythms around your baby's sleep needs and patterns. Once you're familiar with your own baby's sleep patterns, you can begin establishing regular routines to help your baby—and the whole family—get to sleep and sleep well.

#### *Newborns*

##### *0-2 months*

##### *No night, no day*

A newborn's sleep cycle is disorganized. In the first few weeks, you can expect your baby's sleep to be distributed throughout the 24 hours, with each sleep period lasting anywhere from 30 minutes to 3 hours, and with frequent waking periods throughout the night. In about six weeks a more regular, defined sleep pattern should begin to emerge.

While sleeping, your baby may be very busy twitching, jerking, sucking, snuffling—even smiling. This is normal. Even with all this activity, your baby is actually getting a perfectly sound sleep.

*Infants*

*2-12 months*

*Getting in the rhythm*

Gradually, over the first few months, your baby will begin to develop a more predictable pattern. Between 2 and 4 months, you will notice a regular rhythm of sleepiness and alertness throughout the day.

Between 3 and 6 months, most babies begin to sleep for longer stretches at night. In the first year, babies naturally cut down their daily naps from 3 or 4 a day to 1 or 2 a day. Note that developmental milestones, such as rolling over and pulling up to stand, can temporarily upset sleep.

*Toddlers*

*1-3 years*

*New nap schedules*

Your toddler may be finished with morning naptime by around 18 months, and naps will disappear altogether between 2 1/2 and 5 years.

At the same time, most toddlers will have learned to sleep through the night, although stressful events and other interruptions (an illness, a trip) can temporarily upset this welcome patter. Switching to a bed is another change that can be disruptive for a toddler, especially if it happens too early. Most toddlers switch to a bed between 2 and 4 years.

If you regularly have to wake your child in the morning, it could be a sign that he or she isn't getting enough sleep. The number of hours a toddler sleeps will be different for each child. However, most toddlers are consistent in how much they sleep from one day to the next.

**How Long Will Your Baby Sleep?**

Parents often ask how much sleep their baby should be getting. That's what this chart is designed to show. But remember, your baby is a unique individual. These figures are averaged from many individuals, to use as a reference point. Some babies or toddlers will sleep up to two hours more, or less, than these averages.

<b>Newborns</b>	<b>A Wide Range of Possibilities</b>				
Newborns have no regular defined sleep pattern in the first few weeks—which usually requires some adjustment for new parents	0 to 2 months	The Range		The Average	
		10.5 to 18 hours		14.5 hours	
<b>Infants</b>	<b>Night is For Sleeping</b>				
The balance shifts towards longer nighttime sleep, with distinct daytime naps.	2 to 12 months	Age	Total Average Sleep	Total Nighttime Sleep	Total Nap Sleep
		2 months	14.5 hrs	9.5 hrs	5 hrs
		6 months	14.5 hrs	11 hrs	3.5 hrs
		12 months	14 hrs	11.5 hrs	2.5 hrs
<b>Toddlers</b>	<b>Busy Days, Restful Nights</b>				
Toddlers continue to sleep long hours at night, while the need for daytime naps is tapering off. But watch out! There's nothing more exhausting than an over-tired toddler.	1 to 3 years	Age	Total Average Sleep	Total Nighttime Sleep	Total Nap Sleep
		1 year	14 hrs	11.5 hrs	2.5 hrs
		3 years	13 hrs	11.5 hrs	1.5 hrs

## Go With the Flow

The first few weeks of your baby's life are all about adjustment—for your baby and for you. It's simply too soon to expect structured sleep patterns, so it makes sense to take your cues from your baby. Do what works for your baby now, and before long you'll have the beginnings of a sleep routine.

## How to Help Your Newborn Become a Good Sleeper

- Learn your baby's signs of being sleepy. Many babies become fussy or cry when they get tired, but others will rub their eyes, pull on their ears, or even stare off into space. Put your baby down for bedtime or a nap when your baby first lets you know he or she is tired.
- Follow your baby's cues. Your newborn may prefer to be rocked or fed to sleep. This is fine for the first few weeks or months. By three months, however, begin to establish good sleep habits.
- Always put your baby down to sleep on his or her back. A baby should sleep on a firm mattress, with no fluffy or loose bedding.
- After the first few weeks, start to actively encourage nighttime sleep if your baby is awake a lot at night and sleeps much of the day. Do this by making sure the bedroom is dark or dim and cutting down on nighttime play.
- Make sleep a family priority. It's usual to be sleep-deprived with a newborn. But no one benefits if you're crying from exhaustion while the baby's crying to be calmed. Tell your spouse (or a friend who's offered) when you need a break. And, tempting as it is to use naptimes to get things done, you'll be able to cope better if you nap when your baby does.
- Have realistic goals about sleep. Your baby will not be able to sleep for long stretches at a time for the first few months.
- Take the first steps toward a bedtime routine. The important thing is that it's built around things that both you and your baby enjoy. Your newborn's bedtime routine could include:
  - Taking a bath
  - Getting a massage
  - Changing into pajamas
  - Rocking and cuddling
  - Sharing a song
  - Or whatever works best for you and your baby

## How to Help Your Infant Sleep Well

- Find a bedtime routine that works. From 6 weeks to 3 months, start creating a familiar sequence of calming events that unfolds night after night and clearly says, "it's time to settle down and go to sleep." Now that your baby's sleep patterns are becoming more organized, it's time for a bedtime routine that will fit in with your family's needs as well as your baby's needs. Keep the sequence of events basically consistent even with caregivers or when away from home. It can also be helpful to have parents take turns putting their baby to bed.
- Learn your baby's signs of being sleepy. Many babies become fussy or cry when they get tired, but others will rub their eyes, pull on their ears, or even stare off into space. Put your baby down for bedtime or a nap when your baby first lets you know he or she is tired.
- Start developing a bedtime routine. Make sure your routine is not too long or too impractical to stick to. Rock your baby to sleep at 6 months, and you may end up doing the same when the baby wakes in the night—as all babies do for short periods—or even when your little one turns two.
- Set a regular sleep schedule for your baby. Settle on regular naptimes and a bedtime that allow your baby to get all the sleep he or she needs. Contrary to what you may think, cutting down on naps won't help at night. It can be a recipe for overtiredness and a worse night's sleep. But you'll also want to avoid naps too close to bedtime.
- Give your baby soothing surroundings. Keep the bedroom dark, cool and quiet. And make sure lights and environment are the same at bedtime as they will be throughout the night.
- Wind down your bedtime routine where you want your baby to sleep. The last part of the routine should happen in the room where baby sleeps.

- Avoid making bedtime feedings a permanent fixture. They rarely help either how long or how well your baby sleeps. And after 6 months, nighttime feedings are rarely necessary. Move a bottle or nursing time a little earlier in the evening to avoid the association between eating and sleeping.
- Put your baby to bed drowsy, but awake. This may teach your baby to soothe himself or herself to sleep, as well as to go back to sleep in the night on his or her own, with little if any intervention from you.
- Make sleep a family priority. Remember, you need sleep, too. If friends and family have offered to help, take them up on the offer. Resist as much as you can treating your baby's naptime as your chore time. Take a nap when your baby does.
- Build a consistent bedtime routine you and your baby enjoy. For an infant, this could include:
  - Taking a bath
  - Getting a massage
  - Changing into pajamas
  - Hearing a story
  - Sharing a song
  - Or whatever works for you and your baby

## How to Help Your Toddler Sleep Well

- Your toddler's sleep patterns will continue to change. Toddlers can generally sleep through the night, although change and stressful events (a trip or illness, for example) can cause temporary setbacks. All children wake briefly at regular intervals throughout the night. A toddler who's learned to fall asleep on his or her own will be able to return to sleep without help from you—although normal bedtime fears and nightmares may need your reassurance.
- Set a regular sleep schedule. Establish regular naptimes and a bedtime that allow your toddler to get all the sleep he or she needs. Restricting naps won't help a toddler sleep better at night. Quite the opposite—it can lead to overtiredness and more sleep problems. But, avoid naps late in the afternoon.
- Wind down your routine where your child sleeps. Make sure the last few soothing minutes of the bedtime routine happen right in your toddler's room.
- Give your toddler soothing surroundings. Keep the bedroom dark, cool and quiet. A night-light is fine. A television isn't. And make sure the environment is the same at bedtime—lighting, for example—as it will be throughout the night.
- Put your child to bed drowsy but awake. This may teach your toddler to fall asleep, as well as go back to sleep in the night on his or her own, with little if any help from you. Whatever routine you have established at bedtime will need to occur again in the middle of the night. So create a routine that helps your child fall asleep on his or her own.
- Set limits. If your child stalls at bedtime, set clear limits, such as how many books you will read or how many drinks of water you will allow.
- Make sleep a family priority. Remember, looking after a toddler takes plenty of energy. You need your sleep, too.
- Build a regular bedtime routine everyone enjoys. For a toddler, this could include:
  - Taking a bath
  - Changing into pajamas
  - Reading books together
  - Sharing a song
  - Or whatever works best for you and your toddler