

Some Sleeping Tips for new parents!

6-12 months

By the age of six months most babies are physiologically capable of sleeping through the night and no longer require night-time feedings. However 25-50% continue to awaken during the night. When it comes to waking during the night, the most important point to understand is that all babies wake briefly between four to six times. Babies who are able to soothe themselves back to sleep (“self-soothers”) awaken briefly and go right back to sleep. In contrast, “signalers” are those babies who awaken their parents and need help getting back to sleep. Many of these signalers have developed inappropriate sleep onset associations and have difficulty self-soothing. This is often the result of parents developing the habit of helping their baby to fall asleep by rocking, holding, or bringing the child into their own bed. Over time, babies may learn to rely on this kind of help from their parents in order to fall asleep. Although this may not be a problem at bedtime, it may lead to difficulties with your baby falling back to sleep on his/her own during the night.

Safe sleeping practices for Infants

- Place your baby on their back to sleep at night and during naptime
- Place your baby on a firm mattress in a safety-approved cot with slats no greater than 2 3/8 inches apart
- Make sure your baby's face and head stay uncovered and clear of blankets and other coverings during sleep
- Create a “smoke-free-zone” around your baby
- Avoid overheating during sleep and maintain your baby's bedroom temperature comfortable for an average adult
- Remove all mobiles and hanging toys by about the age of 5 months, when your baby begins to pull up in the cot

How to Help your Infant Sleep Well

- *Learn your baby's signs of being sleepy* – some babies fuss or cry when they are tired, whereas others rub their eyes, stare off into space, or pull their ears. Your baby will fall asleep more easily and more quickly if you put them down as soon as they start showing tired signs
- *Develop a daily sleep schedule* – Babies sleep best when they have consistent sleep times and wake times. Note that cutting back on naps to encourage night-time sleep can result in overtiredness and a worse night's sleep
- *Encourage the use of a security object* – Once your baby is old enough (by 12 months) introduce a transitional/love object, such as a blanket, muslin, small soft toy. Include it as part of your bedtime routine and whenever you are cuddling or comforting your baby. Don't force your baby to accept the object and realise that some babies never develop an attachment to a single item
- *Develop a bedtime routine* – Establish a consistent bedtime routine that includes calm and enjoyable activities, such as bath and bedtime stories, and that you can stick with as your baby grows older. The activities occurring closest to “lights out”

should occur in the room where your baby sleeps. Also, avoid making bedtime feedings part of the bedtime routine after 6 months

- *Set up a consistent bedroom environment* – Make sure your child’s bedroom environment is the same at bedtime as it is throughout the night (e.g. lighting). Also, babies sleep best in a room that is dark, cool and quiet
- *Put your baby to bed drowsy but awake* – After your bedtime routine, put your baby to bed drowsy but awake which will encourage them to fall asleep independently. This will teach your baby to soothe themselves to sleep, so that they will be able to fall back to sleep on their own when they naturally awaken through the night
- *Sleep when your baby sleeps* – Parents need sleep also. Try to nap when your baby naps, and be sure to ask others for help so you can get some rest.
- *Contact your doctor if you are concerned* – Babies who are extremely fussy or frequently difficult to console may have a medical problem such as colic or reflux. Also, be sure to contact your doctor if your baby ever seems to have problems breathing

Where to get help

- Maternal and Child Health nurse
- Your doctor or pediatrician
- Parentline Tel. 132 289
- Tweddle Child and Family Health Service Tel. (03) 9689 1577
- Sids and Kids on 1300 308 307 or visit www.sidsandkids.org

Sleeping and Feeding Chart

This provides a general guide for frequency and duration of sleeps at various ages and frequency of feeds at various ages

| Age | Average hours of sleep required per day | No. of sleeps per day | Awake time before needing a sleep (including feed & play) | Average duration of each sleep |
|----------------|---|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1-4 weeks | 16 | 4 | 1 hour | 3 hours |
| 1-3 months | 15 | 3-4 | 1-1 ½ hours | 2 ½ - 3 hours |
| 3-6 months | 8-10 at night | 2-3 | 2-2 ½ hours | 2 hours |
| 6-12 months | 10-12 at night | 2 | 3-3 ½ hours | 1 ½ - 2 hours |
| 12 months plus | 10-12 at night | 1-2 | 4+ hours | 1-1 ½ hours |