



# SLEEP & YOUR BABY



Sleep is often one of the most pressing issues for parents. The sheer quantity of books on the subject matter and the number of sleep experts, reflects how desperate families can become when their children are unable to sleep. Therefore, we've decided to publish this brief (but hopefully thorough) document to help you preventatively address sleep issues and avoid many of the pitfalls that parents unwittingly fall into.

Sleep is one of your baby's most important jobs – it's crucial for good health, learning, memory and emotional development. When you give your baby's sleep needs a top priority you give them a head start on cognitive and emotional intelligence.

AGE	NIGHT SLEEP	DAY SLEEP
0-2 WKS	Total of 16-20 hours of sleep in various durations	
2 wks to 6 mo	11-12 hours	3-4 hours during the day in 3-4 naps
6 - 9 mo	11-12 hours	2-3 hours during the day in 2-3 naps
9 - 18 mo	11-12 hours	2-3 hours during the day in 1-2 naps
18 mo to 3 yrs	10-12 hours	1-2 hours during the day (1 nap)
3 - 5 yrs	10-11 hours	Sometimes 1 nap (most stop between 3 & 4 yrs)
5 yrs	9-10 hours	No nap

**Never wake a sleeping baby!**  
 (except if your pediatrician recommends it in the case of low-birth weight or other special needs babies)



**How do babies sleep? The Ultradian Cycle** - All humans have two internal clocks that govern sleep - the Circadian and the Ultradian. For parents and babies, it is the Ultradian that rules. The human Ultradian is 90 minutes long, so after waking, over the next 90 minutes, our bodies ramp up and then as we near the 90 minute mark, we slow down. This effect is especially dominant in children before their first birthday and unlike adults, who just lose focus at the end of the cycle, they often actually need to sleep.

**What does this mean for you and your baby?** After being awake for 90 minutes, your baby is especially ready to sleep. Putting a baby to sleep every 90 minutes may sound like a lot of sleep, but if you consider how new EVERYTHING is to them, you'll come to understand how overwhelming just 90 minutes can be. If you're attuned to these sleep rhythms, and allow your baby to sleep when s/he is tired, **your baby will experience more restful sleep and more focused periods of alertness.** Over time, the stretches of alertness will increase in increments of 90 minutes to three hours, to four and half etc. and the stretches of sleep will increase as well.

**How do babies fall asleep?** If at the end of 90 minutes, babies need to sleep, why don't they fall asleep on their own? Because the ultradian cycle governs wakefulness, and as the clock runs down, it withdraws alertness – it doesn't bring on sleep. Therefore, for some time you must help your baby sleep as s/he simply doesn't have the capacity to do so on her own (there is the rare exception of babies who sleep 12 hours at two months

but this is the exception and despite all societal pressure, it is not the rule). For most caretakers, helping a newborn baby to sleep happens naturally with **swaddling, rocking, singing, cradling or nursing/feeding.** It's usually around three - four months that babies begin to form sleep associations, so that however you are "teaching" them to fall asleep, becomes what they will need going forward. Therefore, it's important that you know your options and choose a method that you think best suits your family and your child.

*Soothing techniques should be something you feel you can repeat for a long time, so you may want to avoid techniques that are hard to repeat like riding in a car or that will be too exhausting for you as your child grows. Here's a brief list:*

Regular soothing techniques for EVERYDAY use:	Soothing technique for RARE use:
Rocking	Driving in a car
Swinging baby in your arms	Walking baby in a stroller
Walking with baby in your arms or sling	Placing baby in a swing
Singing, hushing or repetitive whispered speech	Feeding (after 3 months; before 3 months it's fine to feed to sleep)

*"For babies, sleeping is like breathing – you can't breathe too much today and not need to breathe tonight"* Polly Moore, *The 90 Minute Sleep Plan*

Information for this handout was taken from the following resources:  
*The Happiest Baby on the Block* by Harvey Karp  
*The 90-minute Sleep Program* by Polly Moore  
*The No-cry Sleep Solution* by Elizabeth Pantley  
*Secrets of the Baby-Whisperer* by Tracy Hog  
*The Lull-a-Baby Sleep Plan* by Cathryn Tobin

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**Sleep Challenges.** Major developmental milestones can affect sleep. In addition to teething (which is often over-diagnosed as the reason for sleep problems), baby's sleep patterns are affected when they reach major developmental milestones, particularly physical ones, as they tend to "practice" them in their sleep. Remember, not every baby exhibits every milestone. Some skip crawling and just walk, others never roll over from back to front etc. *The list below is just to provide forewarning:*

Physical Milestone	Time Frame
Rolling over	3-6 months
Sitting up	5-7 months
Crawling	6-10 months
Pulling to Standing	8 months

**Sleep locations.** Where a baby sleeps is an important aspect of their rest, It is important to be consistent. There are many different sleeping arrangement options. Consider what speaks to you as a parent, what you know you can commit to and what you think is best for your child. The AAP recommends that babies sleep in the same room as a parent in a location that is without blankets and has a firm surface. Babies should always sleep on their backs.



**How do I know if my baby is tired?** In addition to keeping track of the 90 minute cycles the following is a list of typical sleep signals based on developmental state (crying, yawning and eye rubbing are always a signal), but remember that every baby is unique and may show different signals.

Newborn	Makes "oooh" sound, with rounded mouth
Head Control	Turn face away from objects or people, bury their face into chest or shoulder, make involuntary, flailing limb movements
Limb Control	Rub eyes, pull ears, scratch face, hyperactive
Gaining Mobility	Lose coordination, lose interest in toys, may arch back, hyperactive
Crawling and Walking	Lose coordination, can stand but can't get down, cling to adult

## SLEEP THOUGHTS:

- ⊕ Chronic sleep deprivation in children has been linked to attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, weight gain, frequent injury and illness and even growth problems.
- ⊕ In a 1993 study, parents that were told to feed their babies every time they awoke during the night compared to another group that used alternate comforting strategies, had only 25% of the babies sleeping at least 5 hours straight compared to all of the babies in the other group. Babies in both groups were found to be ingesting the same quantity of food over 24 hours.
- ⊕ Be leery of "crying-it-out" methods particularly those that recommend allowing a baby to cry indefinitely. Crying is stressful for a baby and causes the release of stress hormones like cortisol (responsible for the fight or flight mechanism). High levels of cortisol are taxing to the body and brain, so prolonged crying can have negative effects on your child's well-being.
- ⊕ Parents have a choice of encouraging children to sleep independently or of nurturing their children to sleep as is common in attachment parenting. As long as the baby gets the rest she needs without extreme measures, either sleep arrangement is perfectly acceptable.



## TIPS FOR GREAT SLEEP

### GOOD NAPS

*Napping leads to great night time sleep (don't think that by getting them "exhausted" from not taking naps that they'll sleep better – it will only make things worse). But do be wary of naps longer than three hours as they can be a sign that your infant is still confusing day and night.*

### CONSISTENT NAPS

*Have the same short ritual before naps and a different but consistent ritual for bedtime.*

### SWADDLING

*The tight feeling of a blanket around them calms the nervous system and may even remind them of the womb helping them to sleep (at approx. 3-4 months, when your baby can roll, stop swaddling)*

### PACIFIER

*For the first 3 months, a pacifier can help babies that aren't co-sleeping to continue to sooth themselves through sucking. After 3 months, consider removing the pacifier as it can lead to night-time sleep challenges.*

### WHITE-NOISE

*The womb is a noisy place, and in comparison, your baby's new home is deafeningly quiet. You don't have to buy any fancy machinery; an air filter, fan (that doesn't blow on your baby) or even radio left on static can get the job done as well.*

### NON-STIMULATING SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

*Keep mobiles, toys and bright colors out of the sleeping area.*

