

Better Sleep for You and Your Baby



As with every new skill your baby learns, falling asleep in a crib may take practice. Your baby may cry when first put in the crib. This is normal and should be expected. There are a lot of things you can do to help your baby settle down for bed and feel more comfortable sleeping in the crib. Every baby is unique, so you may need to try a few times before you figure out exactly what your baby likes best.

10 Tips to Help You and Your Baby Get a Good Night's Sleep

- 1 Make sure your baby has active play time, such as “tummy time” during the day.
- 2 Respond to your baby’s needs quickly during the day to reduce your baby’s stress.
- 3 Wear your baby in a sling or allow for skin-to-skin contact during the day.
- 4 Keep a journal of when and how much your baby eats and sleeps, and when you change your baby’s diaper. This will help you learn your baby’s pattern so you can plan to rest when your baby sleeps.
- 5 Use a bedtime routine of three or four relaxing activities to help your baby wind down (giving your baby a bath, gently massaging baby’s muscles, and then spending a short period of quiet time together). **Research has shown that babies who have a bedtime routine fall asleep 30% faster, wake up 50% less often, and sleep for longer stretches of time.**
- 6 Talk or sing softly to your baby before bed. Just the sound of your voice is very soothing to your baby.
- 7 Put your baby in the crib when he or she begins to look tired, but is still awake. **Putting babies to bed while they are tired, but still awake, helps them learn to fall asleep on their own.**
- 8 If your baby seems restless at bed time, put your baby to bed 30 minutes earlier. When babies become overtired, they sometimes become energetic and fight off sleep.
- 9 Play soft music, turn on a fan or put a ticking clock near your baby’s crib. Listening to repetitive sounds lulls babies off to sleep. Continuing normal household activities while your baby sleeps helps your baby learn to sleep without silence.
- 10 Place a warm towel down on your baby’s crib sheet and remove it just before you place your baby down.





Understanding Your Baby's Needs

Why does my baby sleep for only a few hours at a time? Newborns may sleep 10 – 18 hours a day, and they may wake to eat every 2 to 4 hours. By eight weeks old, your baby's sleep may develop some sort of pattern.

When will my baby be able to sleep through the night? Babies between 3 and 6 months of age need around 12 – 15 hours of sleep per day, which includes 2 to 4 naps during the day. Babies 6 months old and older are able to sleep through most of the night, but will still need 1 or 2 naps during the day, and many will need at least one nighttime feeding.

Will limiting naps during the day help my baby sleep better at night? According to sleep research, regular naps during the day will improve your baby's sleep during the night. When and how long a baby should nap varies from one baby to the next. As babies grow, they will take fewer and shorter naps until they reach 3 – 4 years of age.

Infant Sleep Troubleshooting Guide

Streetlights or early morning sun coming in through the window may wake a baby from sleep. Use dark colored shades over windows near your baby's sleeping area.

A stuffy nose can cause a baby to wake up. Make sure your baby's nose is clear before bedtime. Help your baby avoid congestion by dusting regularly and removing things that collect dust from the sleeping area. Keep your baby away from smoke, baby powder, hair spray and paint fumes, which can all cause nasal congestion.

Teething pain can prevent your baby from sleeping. Check for drool stains on your baby's sheet, drool rashes on your baby's cheeks and chin, or swollen gums. Your doctor may recommend small doses of acetaminophen.

A wet diaper sometimes causes babies to wake up. Be sure to put your baby to bed with a dry diaper. If you use cloth diapers, consider layering two or three of them for naps and bedtime to reduce the feeling of wetness.

Allergic reactions to fabrics, or the detergent or fabric softener used on the baby's bedding or clothing, may be making your baby uncomfortable. If you see signs of skin irritation or other symptoms, change the bedding and switch laundry products.

Developing babies can have restless nights as they are learning how to sit up, roll over, or walk. They can sometimes practice in their sleep! Your baby can get stuck sitting up because he doesn't know how to lay himself back down yet. This can be fixed by teaching him how. During the day, sit your baby up, help your baby lay back down, and then encourage your baby to practice alone.

If you have tried all suggestions and your baby is still not sleeping well, talk to your baby's doctor. There may be a medical reason for your baby's restless nights. Tell your baby's doctor if your baby:

- Is waking up with Colicky abdominal pains
- Was a good sleeper but suddenly became a restless sleeper
- Has not slept well since he or she was born
- Shows any signs of illness
- Cries often for no apparent reason and cannot be comforted
- Has trouble breathing
- Has changes in behavior because of poor sleep

For more information on healthy child development and safe infant sleep, visit www.ounce.org

