

GETTING THROUGH *THE NIGHT*

A sleep guide for newborns

If you are the sleep-deprived parent of a newborn, you are not alone. While some newborns don't seem to do much but eat, sleep and stay awake for short periods, others are fussy, more wakeful and have better things to do than sleep! Follow your baby's lead and respond to all of his "signals".



PRACTICE SAFE SLEEPING

Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society suggest these safe-sleep guidelines:

- Always place your baby on his back to sleep until 12 months of age. The "Back to Sleep" position is associated with a reduced risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
- Do not let anyone smoke near your baby or where your baby sleeps. Exposure to smoke is one of the greatest risk factors for SIDS.
- Avoid overheating your child. Keep the room temperature on the cool side of comfortable.
- Babies should sleep on a firm, flat surface in a crib or bassinet for all sleep periods (car seats and infant swings should not replace the crib for sleep).
- Ensure the crib meets current Health Canada regulations.
- Keep the crib away from curtains, blind cords, lamps, electrical plugs and extension cords, and out of reach of small objects.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The total hours your baby sleeps will vary and can be unpredictable. Expect your baby to sleep for 10 to 19 hours in a 24-hour period (average is 13 to 15 hours). Remember that premature babies may sleep more.

SLEEP PATTERNS

- Newborns have many sleep periods throughout the day and night.
- Sleep/wake periods are linked to hunger and feelings of fullness.
- Most newborns are ready to sleep after one to two hours of being awake.
- Breastfed babies generally sleep for one to three hours at a time.
- Nighttime sleep starts to lengthen between six and 12 weeks.

DAY/NIGHT REVERSAL

Some newborns sleep more during the day than during the night. Here's how to help:

- Keep lights dim and noise to a minimum during nighttime feeds and diaper changes.
- Increase your baby's wakeful time during the day and wake him for feeds.
- During the day, expose your baby to light (especially early morning natural light) and normal levels of noise, and increase play time.

SOOTHE YOUR BABY

Some newborns are soothed by swaddling, others by white noise or rocking. At this stage, many need help falling and returning to sleep. If your

newborn needs your help, don't worry about bad habits at this age. Feel free to rock, hold or feed Baby to sleep.

ESTABLISHING HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

KEEP BABY WELL RESTED

Try putting your newborn to sleep after one to two hours of being awake. It is important to avoid the overtired state, as babies often have a more difficult time falling asleep when they are overtired. Look for your baby's signs that she is ready to sleep. These signs may include crying, rubbing her eyes, yawning, pulling on her ears or getting fussy.

ENCOURAGE NAPPING

Don't deprive your baby of daytime sleep in hopes of getting her to sleep longer at night. This can actually lead to more difficulties with falling asleep and waking more frequently. Naps are also beneficial to your developing baby's health, and, in fact, sleep experts believe that in young children, sleep begets sleep. That is, the better rested they are, the more easily sleep comes!

DEVELOP A CONSISTENT AND SOOTHING SLEEP ROUTINE

In the first few weeks, you can start developing a bedtime routine and a briefer nap routine. Over time the routine will help cue to your baby that sleepy time is approaching. A bedtime routine should be predictable (the

same every night) and calming. A routine may include having a bath, a massage, putting on pajamas, feeding and singing a song. A nap routine may consist of a feed, diaper change and song.

PUT YOUR BABY DOWN TO SLEEP DROWSY, BUT AWAKE

When it comes to sleep, it is never too soon to start thinking about developing good sleep habits. When you notice that your baby is drowsy, place her in the crib and see if she can fall asleep on her own. At this young age, some babies seem to get the skill (and start sleeping for longer periods of time), while others don't. Don't worry if your baby has difficulty falling asleep on her own; keep trying. This skill will develop as she grows and as you give her more opportunities to practice.

YOU NEED SLEEP, TOO!

Whether this is your first baby or not, parents are often in need of support and rest during the first few months of bringing home a new baby.

- If you need a break, enlist the help of willing family and friends.
- When you have extra time, catch up on much needed sleep.
- Try to do something relaxing every day such as taking a walk, having a bath, or calling a friend. **bw**

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