



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT INFANT SLEEP

Q: What do I need to know about my newborn's need for sleep?

- First, that there is no need to put your newborn on a sleep schedule. Their internal clock is not yet developed.
- Second, expect that your baby will sleep anywhere from 16-20 hours out of 24. These hours are often divided fairly equally between day and night.

Q: What kinds of sleep aids tend to be helpful for newborns?

- Pacifiers
- Swaddle or sleep sack
- White noise machine
- Room darkening shades
- Motion (swing, sling or stroller)

Q: Can you hold a newborn baby too much and start them off with bad sleep habits?

- Very simply, no! Making the transition from being in utero to being out in the world is a difficult one for new babies. They are used to having all their needs met without needing to ask for help. They are also used to the comforting sound of your voice and heartbeat, as well as being cozy. Holding your baby often gives them the message that you are there for them and available to meet their needs. This is essential in the development of a healthy attachment.

Q: When is a good time to introduce a bedtime routine?

- We know that by approximately 8 weeks of age (for a full-term baby) infants have the capacity to learn from repetition. This means they can learn that a bedtime routine ultimately leads to falling asleep.

Q: What might a good bedtime routine entail?

- Generally speaking, a bedtime routine should last about 30-45 minutes from start to finish. For most babies, it is really effective to kick off a bedtime routine with a bath. Many babies love getting naked and taking a warm bath and find it enjoyable and relaxing. It also serves as a great way to transition from the daytime to the nighttime.
- At this point, there are many things parents do as part of a good routine that may include a massage, getting the baby in his or her pajamas, reading or singing a song and feeding.
- The real key at this point is ensuring that your baby not be fully asleep by the time you put her down in her crib/co-sleeper or bassinet to sleep. It is very helpful if she does the last little bit of putting herself to sleep.

Q: When would it be reasonable to expect that a baby can sleep through the night?

- Our definition of sleeping through the night is 11-12 hours uninterrupted. For most typical babies, this is attainable by the time they are 16 weeks old and 14 pounds. Remember, for parents of preemies, they should calculate weeks old from their baby's due date.
- A small percentage of babies at 4 months continue to need one night feeding, but generally speaking, they should be able to consolidate their sleep into two long stretches with a feeding in the middle of the night.

Q: How does daytime sleep factor into the equation?

- By about 4-5 months most babies have developed a consistent 3 (or 4) naps per day schedule.
- Daytime sleep can be harder to get, but it is important to ensure that your baby doesn't get overtired during the day because this will likely make their night sleep more interrupted and shorter.

Q: Does it matter where a baby sleeps?

- Yes, it does. To the extent possible, it is best to have your baby sleeping flat on their backs in their beds. The more consistent you are about keeping your child's sleeping environment the same, the more likely they are to take sleep easily in that place.

Q: Why is good quality sleep so important for a baby?

- Because babies' brains and bodies are growing when they sleep. This is when growth hormones are released. This is also when the body and mind are restoring. Babies who get too little sleep tend to be very

fussy and easily over-stimulated. There are also many long-term negative affects associated with poor sleep habits during childhood.

Q: What is an optimal sleep environment for a baby?

- Ideally, babies will go to sleep at night in a room that is quite dark. Target an 8 or 9 on a 10-point scale.
- The room temperature should be on the cool side. Anywhere from 68-72 degrees is considered optimal
- Ensure that there is a fan/open window/air purifier circulating air in the babies' room
- Use a white noise machine for comfort as well as to screen out any loud or unexpected noises
- Remove any mobiles or toys from the baby's crib. These only stimulate or confuse a baby that it's playtime as opposed to bedtime.