

Sleep in Infants

Sleep is important for the body to grow, develop, and restore itself. This is especially true for newborn babies and infants in their first year of life when development is happening very quickly. You may notice that your baby is sleeping often and has different sleep patterns compared to older children, teenagers, and adults. Infants spend more hours asleep and more time in rapid eye movement (REM) sleep which is thought to nurture brain development, knowledge, and behavior. This fact sheet will talk about sleep in infants 24 months and younger.



What is normal sleep for my baby?

Infant sleep patterns vary with age. Before 6 months of age, it can be normal for infants to have irregular sleep patterns. Below is a general guideline for sleep time, although individual infants may have different sleep needs.

Age	Recommended hours of sleep per 24 hours
Newborn – 1 month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 16 to 20 hours ◆ Sleep for 1 to 4 hour periods followed by 1 to 2 hours of time awake. ◆ The amount of daytime sleep equals night time sleep.
1 – 4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 15 to 17 hours ◆ Sleep for 3 to 4 hour periods. ◆ Knowing day versus night starts between 6 weeks to 3 months
4 – 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 12 to 16 hours ◆ (including daytime naps: typically 30 minutes to 3 hours)
12 – 24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 11 to 14 hours ◆ (including daytime naps: typically 30 minutes to 2 hours)

When should my baby be sleeping through the night?

Infants are able to start sleeping through the night by 4 to 6 months of age because they are able to sleep for 4-6 hour periods. Before 4 months of age, babies feed every 3 to 4 hours and wake up to eat in the middle of the night. Up to 80% of babies will sleep through the night by 9 months of age.

How should my baby be sleeping?

- Think S.A.F.E! (Supine–Alone–Firm Mattress–Empty Crib)
- It is recommended that all infants younger than 12 months of age sleep on their back (supine) to decrease the risk of Sudden

Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep. However, once your baby can roll back to front and front to back, then he or she can stay in the sleep position they choose. Supervised tummy time while awake is recommended to help motor development and decrease the chance of a flat spot on the head.

- Babies should sleep alone in a crib or bassinette in their parents' room.
- Babies should sleep on a firm surface. Do not allow babies to sleep on sofas or armchairs.
- Babies should sleep in an empty crib. Do not put toys, blankets, or pillows in the crib. Bumper pads in the crib are not recommended.
- For sleep, dress your baby in infant sleepwear or a wearable blanket. Avoid loose blankets in the crib.
- Avoid head coverings such as hats to prevent overheating.
- Do not use sitting devices such as car seats or strollers for routine sleep. If your baby falls asleep in one of these, move him or her to a firm sleep surface as soon as possible.
- Pacifiers may be used at nap time and bedtime.
- Avoid secondhand tobacco smoke or nicotine vapor exposure.

Is sleeping with my baby in the same bed okay?

Sleeping with your baby on the same surface is called bed-sharing. Bed sharing puts your baby at risk for physical injury and suffocation. Bed sharing is not recommended for infants, especially if your baby is younger than 4 months of age. Bed sharing is especially unsafe if your baby was premature, if the bed surface is soft (such as a sofa or armchair), if there are many pillows or blankets in the bed, or if anyone in the bed smokes, drinks alcohol, or takes medications that make it hard to wake up.

My baby has trouble falling asleep. What can I do to help him or her sleep?

- Keep a simple bedtime routine every night. Choose quiet and

calm activities to get your baby ready for sleep. Stick to a consistent bedtime.

- Put your baby to bed when drowsy but still awake. This will help teach your baby to learn to fall asleep on their own in their crib. Do not nurse or rock your baby to sleep.
- Make daytime playtime. Read and play with your baby during the day to increase the amount of time he or she is awake. This will make your baby more tired and ready for sleep at night.

Should I use a white noise machine?

Infant sleep machines are being sold to provide ambient noise. However, they are being sold with limited or no instructions on safe use. It can be difficult to control the level of noise and can be harmful to your baby's ears and lead to hearing loss. If you do choose to use an infant sleep machine, place it as far away from your baby as possible. Never put it in the crib or on the crib rail. Play the noise at a low volume and use only for a short period of time.

My baby wakes up all night. What can I do to help him or her sleep through the night?

- Nighttime awakenings are a normal part of your baby's sleep cycle, but they become problematic when your baby is unable to fall back asleep quickly on his or her own.
- There are a few different methods to help your baby fall asleep easily and stay asleep. You can decide what works best for you and your baby. Discuss your baby's nighttime awakenings with your healthcare provider to rule out medical causes before trying these methods.

Dream Feeding

- The goal of dream feeding is to reduce nighttime awakenings by feeding your baby at a single planned time during the night. This method can be used with babies who are over 2 months of age. It may be useful in infants older than 6 months of age, when nighttime feedings are more likely for comfort than nutrition.
- After your baby has been sleeping 2 to 3 hours, gently wake him or her up and offer a feed. After your baby feeds, place your baby back in the crib. If he or she wakes up again during the night, you may soothe your baby but do not feed him or her again.
- When your baby wakes up in the morning, change his or her clothes and move to another room before feeding.

Graduated extinction method:

- The goal of graduated extinction is to help your baby learn to fall asleep independently by slowly increasing the amount of time that you let your baby cry until he or she learn to "self-soothe."
- At the beginning of training, let your baby cry only a few minutes before soothing him or her. Slowly increase the amount of time you let your baby to cry before returning to soothe him or her. Over time, your baby will learn to calm his or herself and fall back to sleep on his or her own.
- When you return to soothe your baby, try not to stay with him or her longer than 1-2 minutes. Leave the light off and keep your voice quiet and calm. Try not to pick up your baby to comfort him or her.

What are signs that my baby's sleep is not normal?

Signs of abnormal sleep include frequent awakenings, restlessness, mouth breathing, snoring, noisy breathing, long pauses in breathing, and sleeping with the neck extremely extended. These may be signs of sleep apnea. In the first month of life it can be normal to see short pauses in breathing followed by rapid breathing during sleep but this should not be seen with color changes or loud, noisy breathing.

Where can I go to learn more about healthy sleep?

For further information on healthy sleep in children, teens, and adults read the American Thoracic Society Patient Information handouts at www.thoracic.org/patients or visit the American Academy of Pediatrics' website www.healthychildren.org. If you or your child continues to have sleep problems such as restless sleep or difficulty going to sleep, talk with your healthcare provider or a sleep specialist.

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Rx Action Steps

- ✓ Infants sleep more than older children, teenagers, or adults. The younger the baby, the more he or she will sleep in the daytime. At around 4 to 6 months of age, infants can start sleeping through the night without feeding. It is normal for babies to take naps.
- ✓ Create a safe sleep environment by always putting your baby "back to sleep" on a firm surface with no blankets, pillows, or toys. It is especially important to protect your infant from secondhand smoke and overheating.
- ✓ There are different methods of sleep training and simple bedtime routines. Try what works best for you and your family. Create good habits early and stick to them.
- ✓ If there you have any concerns about your baby's sleep or breathing, discuss them with your healthcare provider or sleep specialist.

Healthcare Provider's Contact Number:

Resources

American Thoracic Society
www.thoracic.org/patients

Healthy Children.org from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
www.healthychildren.org

Sleep Education—American Academy of Sleep Medicine
www.sleepeducation.org

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