



## Infant Sleep Tips – How to Get Your Baby to “Sleep Like a Baby”

- Safe sleep = Alone. Back. Crib. May have one swaddle blanket (preferably Halo or Velcro), but nothing else in the crib/bassinet. Pacifiers, fans, breastfeeding, and avoiding tobacco exposure protect against SIDS.
- Should discontinue swaddling by three months or when trying to roll, whichever comes first
- Sleep begets sleep – overtired babies do not sleep well due to increased adrenaline release. Adrenaline makes overtired children appear “wired”
- Never wake a sleeping baby unless you have a good reason, and don’t try to keep a baby awake (counterintuitively this usually leads to poorer nighttime sleep)
- Sleep is a learned skill – parents must teach this to babies for lifelong healthy sleep
- Babies are unable to effectively self-soothe and do not produce melatonin until 6-8 weeks old this is when sleep starts to organize and bedtime moves earlier (often by 7 pm)
- Early on babies often require assistance to fall asleep. After two to three months of age parents soothing attempts are actually more stimulating to baby, and thus counter-productive.
- For the first three months of life babies should be awake for no longer than 60 to 90 minutes at a time before napping. (Naps are frequent and variable in length during this stage)
- Aim for an Eat, Play, Sleep cycle rather than feeding to sleep
- Try to encourage naps at the first signs of drowsiness. These can be subtle – young infants may not rub eyes or yawn. Initially they may just have decreased activity or a “droopy face”. Fussiness is a later sign of fatigue.
- Help baby fall asleep in the crib or bassinet rather than attempting to transfer her after she has fallen asleep. This often involves jiggling the mattress, patting, and/or holding the binky.
- Starting around one month of age pause for 1 to 5 minutes before responding immediately to baby’s fussing. Often they are not quite awake – just transitioning through a lighter sleep stage

- Sleep training is a gift to give to your baby (and it benefits you too!)
  - Healthy babies who are at least 12 pounds (breast or bottle fed) do not require nutrition in the middle of the night
  - This works better and more quickly when done earlier (around four to six months of age)
  - Infant should already be going to sleep on his own (put down while drowsy but AWAKE for bedtime)
  - After 5 minutes of fussing in the middle of the night: go in and reassure (briefly tell baby he/she is ok, its bedtime. Mommy/Daddy is right here”) and then leave. Do NOT turn on lights or pick baby up. Try not to touch baby.
  - If you feel you need to, you may repeat this procedure after every 10 to 15 minutes. You may also leave your baby to cry. If you leave them to fuss, they will eventually fall asleep.
  - This may take several hours initially and 3 to 5 days before an effect is seen
  - The goal is that your baby will either not wake at all or wake briefly and put herself back to sleep within 5 minutes
  - The key is to be firm and consistent. If you give in just once it becomes much harder to succeed. Baby learns that if she is persistent (cries more) you will give in.
  - Sometimes regressions happen, especially in the context of illness, travel, time change, and growth spurts. In these cases babies may need a sleep training refresher.
- Children need more sleep than you think
  - The average 4 to 9 month old takes three naps daily and requires 14+ hours total daily sleep.
  - Somewhere between 8 to 10 months babies transition out of the evening nap, but may need an earlier bedtime to compensate. They still need 13 to 14 hours total daily sleep.
  - Most children are ready to transition to one longer nap (ideally 1.5 to 2 hours) between fifteen to eighteen months, but they still require 11 to 12 hours at night.
  - Children typically stop napping entirely between four to five years. At this age they generally need 12 to 13 hours at night if they are not napping.

## **Resources**

- *Healthy Sleep Habits Happy Child* by Marc Weissbluth, MD
- *Happiest Baby on the Block* (DVDs or book) by Harvey Karp, MD
- *The Good Sleeper* by Janet Krone Kennedy PhD