

## Sleep (infants 0-12 months)

This purpose of this information is to help you understand more about your baby's sleep. Many parents expect that the arrival of a new baby will have an impact on their own sleep. We hope that the information below gives you some helpful advice.

### Baby sleep patterns

Every baby's sleep is different. In the first few months of life a baby's sleep varies greatly. Some babies sleep for 8 hours and others for 20 hours in a 24-hour period.

Young babies sleep for short amounts of time throughout the day and night and don't usually sleep for more than 3 hours at a time.

They have small stomachs and wake up every 2-3 hours for a feed. Some babies wake and feed more often than this.

### Night waking

Night waking is normal. Babies are not born with a body clock and so cannot tell the difference between night and day. Their body clock develops over time. Babies wake at the end of each sleep cycle and to be fed. Night feeds also help mums make plenty of milk if they are breastfeeding.

By 3 months of age some babies may skip a night feed and sleep for around 5 hours at a time although many begin night waking again at age 4-5 months.

By 5 months of age about half of babies may settle for 8 hours at a time on some nights. It is normal for some babies to begin waking more frequently during the night again at age 8-9 months.

Many babies continue to wake through the night for at least the first year of life. Most babies are at least 1 year old by the time they are settled all night every night. By the age of 1 year most of a baby's sleep occurs during the night and their body clock is beginning to develop.

### Daily routines

You can help your baby develop their body clock by helping them learn that daylight is for being awake and darkness is for sleeping. Taking your baby for a morning walk or



spending some time outdoors with them during the day is a great way to help them learn this. Getting outside each day is also good for parents.

It can be helpful to start your baby's day at the same time each day. Opening the curtains and letting light into the room and allowing your baby to wake up naturally at the same time each day can help set their body clock.

It takes time, but after 2 weeks you may notice fewer night awakenings.

Try to avoid long day time naps in dark rooms. Allow your baby to sleep on the go in the pram, sling, or car or in light rooms in the day with the curtains open.

This will lead to shorter naps which fit in with day-to-day activities. This will help your baby learn that quiet, dark rooms are for longer night-time sleeps.

Your baby will then be ready to take part in daytime activities, which will help them to sleep well at night-time.

Babies under 6 months old should not sleep in a room by themselves during the day or night due to the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

For further information on safe sleep please see [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk) or [www.basisonline.org.uk](http://www.basisonline.org.uk)

Doing something active in the day is good for you and your baby's sleep. This could be going for a walk, going to a class, meeting with friends, or dancing to music at home. Try to plan something in advance for each day.

### Managing disrupted sleep

Getting your baby back to sleep quickly gives you and your baby more sleep time. When your baby wakes, respond to them as soon as you can so they don't get too upset. If they get very distressed it may take them longer to settle to sleep. Try to keep things quiet and lighting levels low in the night.

It may be helpful to change your own bedtime so that you sleep when your baby has their longest sleep. A slightly longer spell of sleep for 3-5 hours at the beginning of the night may help you manage more frequent waking through the early hours.

**It is important to remember that it is normal for all infants and children to wake briefly during the night.**

### Developing healthy infant sleep habits

Babies find feeding and cuddles soothing. It is okay to let your baby fall asleep during a feed or whilst being held.

It is important for your baby to be calm enough to sleep. Relaxing activities for babies might include feeding, sucking on a finger, cuddling, skin to skin contact, being carried while walking, gentle massage or the movement of a pram or car.

Every baby is different, and it can take time to work out what your baby likes. It takes time to get to know what your baby likes, and dislikes so don't be worried about trying out different things.

Acknowledgements: With thanks to the Sleep, Baby and You programme and BASIS for information used in this leaflet. For further information please visit <https://ndceducationhub.com/course/sleep-baby-you/> and [www.basisonline.org.uk](http://www.basisonline.org.uk)

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