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Sleep Help for New Parents

Welcome to Parenthood!

Congratulations! You have been blessed with the greatest gift that a human being can ever get - the chance to love and cherish a baby.

Nothing can be more important than making sure your newborn is getting enough sleep.

Experts recommend that newborns get 16 - 18 hours of sleep, and after three months, babies need about 15 hours of sleep in every 24 hour period. As a parent, you cannot make your newborn sleep, you can only provide the opportunity and environment to make it happen.

Taking Care of Your Newborn Baby

A newborn doesn't do much! To be perfectly specific, for the first few months of their life, all they are going to do is feed, soil their diapers, and bestow the occasional look on you, cry and sleep. Most newborns - up to 3 months of age, sleep for around 16-18 hours a day, leaving the rest of the hours for everything else.

This fact would want you to believe that taking care of a newborn should be easy, especially since they would be sleeping for most of the day. The truth is, however, that newborn sleeping patterns are exactly what most parents around the world have a problem with.

Newborn and Infant Sleep Patterns - Basic Facts

Be prepared for interrupted nights!

When we said that most newborns can sleep up to 18 hours a day, it does not mean that they sleep that long at a stretch. Newborn sleep cycles are unpredictable; they usually wake up every 2 to 3 hours hungry and demanding to be fed. Other times, they wake up with a wet diaper, or just because they want some company. After which, it is almost a struggle to get them back to sleep.

This kind of sleeping pattern would have still been acceptable had it not also continued throughout the nights. As your newborn grows from being a newborn to an infant, it will be months until your baby understands the

difference or the implications between day and night and will continue to wake up several times during nighttime as well. It is the parents who face the problem, trying to establish a more civilized sleeping pattern in their babies that will lead to better results. Subsequently, the baby will at least sleep for longer periods during the night.

Getting Your Baby to Sleep

By three months your baby will settle into a sleeping pattern. Getting your baby down for a nap could require some maneuverings from your side. Of course, whether they will work would depend on your baby, but there are some common techniques that seem agreeable with most newborns around the world. As parents who are feeling desperate for lack of sleep, here are some ideas that can help you put your baby to sleep.

- **Let Your Baby Sleep as Frequently as Possible**

Knowing how much sleep your baby needs is the first step to better sleep. Your new baby would not be able to stay awake for more than one and a half or two hours at a stretch, so the best idea for you would be to let them sleep as much as they want to and as frequently as they feel the need to. Some parents try to keep their child awake in the evenings so that they take a longer nap at night, waking up less than they are used to. This doesn't work with infants younger than 6 to 8 months; rather, they will be overtired by the time you consider it bedtime and parents would have a much more difficult time getting their fussy and annoyed child to sleep.

The better idea would be to let your child get their required amount of sleep so that they are in a good mood when you want to get them down for the night. It will certainly make the task easier for you.

- **Try to Recognize Their Sleep Readiness Signs**

Every baby gives out certain signs that they are sleepy and need to be put down for a nap. It might be a few weeks until you recognize your baby's personal signs but when you do, try not to miss them. It could be when they are yawning - as is the universal sign of sleep readiness, or when they are suddenly fussy, or when they are rubbing their eyes and tugging at their ears which could mean they want to sleep.

The moment you see any of these signs of sleep readiness, you need to start preparing your baby for bed. The longer you wait, the fussier they are going to become and the more it will become difficult for you to put your baby to sleep when they have gone past the phase of sleepiness. As a parent you will instinctively know your baby's signs within a few weeks of bonding and this will make your job easier to get them to sleep.

- **Establish the Difference Between Day and Night**

Ideally, babies don't know that we are supposed to sleep during the night and stay awake throughout the day. However, our bodies - courtesy of evolution - have been

programmed to respond to the difference between day and night. The human body knows that we are supposed to rest when it is dark and stay alert when it is light outside.

So try to establish nighttime during the time you consider to be bedtime. Keep all the lights dimmed and all electronic devices off; talk in low tones and keep the general atmosphere of the room quiet and peaceful. Your baby won't be able to relax or sleep in a house that is loud and bright. You need to provide them with an environment where they can feel peaceful and calm.

- **Give Them a Bath Before Bed**

A warm and soothing bath before bedtime has proven to be effective in a large number of

cases, especially if you live in a hot and humid environment. A nighttime bath with warm water and changing into clean clothes could make your baby feel comfortable and drowsy, and bring on sleep more quickly.

- **Establish a Bedtime Routine**

Just like a bath, establish a regular nighttime routine that your baby will start to recognize and associate with sleep, such as, singing a particular lullaby, playing some soft music, reading a book together, dimming the lights, etc. If you follow the same pattern regularly for a few days, the baby will start to recognize it as a cue to fall asleep and start feeling heavy-eyed, making bedtime easier for you.

- **Try to Rock Your Baby to Sleep**

Rocking your baby to sleep is the oldest and probably one of the most effective techniques there is to put your baby to sleep, which parents have followed for thousands of years. You can rock them while sitting down on a chair, walk around with them on your lap, use a cradle or a vibrating baby seat, or any other method that you find useful.

Babies love to be rocked to sleep, but the real problem arises once they get used to the rocking. Exhausted parents discover that their baby prefers to be rocked not only to fall asleep, but throughout the time that they are sleeping, which could be a problem. This is the reason not every parent want their baby to get

accustomed to rocking, and this is actually a very controversial technique of putting your baby to sleep.

- **Get Them to Fall Asleep on Their Own**

Perhaps the best way that you can establish a stable sleep pattern in your child would be to get them to fall asleep by themselves. To try this, put them to bed when they are sleepy but awake, and create a soothing environment around them. This means that the television should be turned off, all cell phones silent and the light dimmed. Someone should be around the baby at all times to keep an eye on them, but your baby needs to learn to entertain themselves until they fall asleep. A projection light can help, or a good musical mobile with soothing music playing, or a ***sound machine***.

A Sound Machine to Help Your Baby Sleep Better!

A sound machine can be a great idea if you want your baby to learn to fall asleep on their own. Sound machines create a sound environment that is both soothing and familiar. Sound machines especially designed for babies feature different types of sound they would be most comfortable listening to, i.e. heartbeats and other sounds they might remember from the womb, white noise, raindrops or sounds from forests and the ocean, etc. These soothing sounds will entertain your baby and at the same time, make them heavy-eyed and help in falling asleep.

Many parents opt for a good sound machine to aid in their baby's sleep, and it is indeed a good, time proven technique, especially if you want your child to become self-dependent in sleep. Your baby will likely find their sound machine to be a helpful sleep tool as he/she becomes a toddler, child, teenager and then an adult.

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