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## **Top Tips for helping you and your baby sleep**

The joy of a new baby is certainly special and something that all new parents experience. However, a lack of sleep is also part of having a new baby and new parents notoriously get very little sleep, if any at all. Fortunately, there are some strategies and tips to help new parents get some sleep when the new baby comes. Of course, with a baby you will never get an over abundance of sleep, but these tips will help you at least get enough sleep to keep your sanity.

### **Tip 1: Take turns**

When the baby starts crying both parents generally wake up, even if only one attends to the baby. However, in the first couple of months both parents might get up each time the baby cries. This will lead to a lack of sleep for both parents. The best plan is for mum and dad to make a plan beforehand of who will get up to comfort the crying baby. Generally, taking turns is really the best option and will help everyone get just a little more sleep.

Obviously, if the mother is breastfeeding, then this can prove more difficult for each of the parent to take turns. A good idea is on occasions for the woman to express some milk in advance and allow the partner to do the feeding in the night. This is a good thing to establish in the first few weeks of a baby's life, so they can get used to feeding from both the breast and a bottle.

Get all bottles, sterilising equipment, formula, etc. ready before you go to bed so as to not make the 'getting up in the middle of the night' process even more painful to deal with!

### **Tip 2: Nap with baby**

If you are caring for the baby and are tired and the baby goes to sleep then you should take a nap as well. It is so tempting to run around the house cleaning up each time the baby has a nap, but you need to rest too. This is particularly important in the first few days and weeks of having your baby. You have been through so much too and to be able to look after your baby, you need to look after yourself!

If you are having a nap with your baby in the day, draw the curtains, put your phone on silent, even pop a note on your front door if you are being inundated with visitors and well wishers - to ensure you get some undisturbed rest! They will understand.

### **Tip 3: Put your baby somewhere different for naps in the day to nighttime**

It is important, even in the early days, to not put your baby in their nighttime sleeping room if possible, as you want to establish a difference for the baby between areas for nap times and nighttime sleeping. This will really help your child settle better at nighttimes as they get older.

Also, when your baby is a little older (3-4 months old), try to avoid naps after 4pm, to ensure that your baby will be more tired at bedtime.

If you are trying to get your baby to sleep, you need to take into consideration that your baby is not used to real silence. They come from your tummy where things were really loud all of the time. Total silence is scary to many babies. Once your baby is asleep, chatting, watching tv, putting on the washing machine and even hoovering should not disturb your baby.

#### **Tip 4: Accept help**

Frequently when you have a new baby there are plenty of people willing to help from parents, siblings, friends, and other family members. So, when you really need to get some sleep just accept some of the help that is being offered. Having your mum or a close friend care for the baby for just a couple of hours will allow you to get some much needed sleep.

#### **Tip 5: Keep baby in their own room after a few months**

In the first few weeks and months, most new parents will have the baby in their own bedroom. To stop the baby disturbing both parents, on occasions, the parent who has the turn to not get up with the baby could set up a bed in the spare room. This will enable each parent to get a turn for a better night's sleep.

After approximately 6 months, it is advisable to put the baby in his or her own room. This will begin to establish a good routine for you and the baby and the baby will begin to identify the differences in the environment between daytime napping and nighttime sleep. Many times it is tempting to allow the baby to sleep with the parents, but this is not healthy for the child or the parents. So, put the baby to sleep in his or her cot in the nursery. Then, when the baby cries one parent can easily go attend to the baby without disturbing the other parent. This allows a little more sleep for parents.

A top tip for new born babies at night is to keep them in their moses basket, but to put the basket inside their cot, to establish right from the off that their cot is where they go to sleep. This will make the transition from moses basket to their cot a lot easier as they outgrow their basket.

#### **Tip 6: Feed baby before you sleep**

If your baby has been asleep for several hours and it is around 11 pm and you are getting ready for bed simply wake baby for a feeding. Most babies wake during the night because they are hungry, so if you feed baby late before you go to bed it is likely they will sleep until early morning or 6-7 hours. This will allow you to get some continuous sleep, even if it is not as much as you want.

It is also important to not let your baby fall asleep while on the breast or on the bottle. If you do, this will become a comforter for your baby and they may struggle to settle unless you do his ritual. If your baby starts to nod off during feeding, gently rub their cheek to awaken them before you put them back down to sleep.

### **Tip 7: Do not rock your baby to sleep**

Rocking your baby slightly to soothe them as they settle is no bad thing, but try to avoid rocking them to sleep, for nap times or nighttimes. Again, this may lead to the child's total dependence on performing that routine to get them to sleep. They need to learn how to sleep for themselves, without the aid of any sort of comforter.

Similarly, try and avoid giving a baby a dummy to go off to sleep with. It may settle them initially, but they will soon wake again when the dummy falls out of their mouth and they will be crying for you to come and get it for them!

### **Tip 8: During night feeds:**

- Keep the lights down low
- Keep your voice low and don't talk too much
- Put your baby down as soon as you have fed and changed him or her
- Don't change your baby if a change is not needed.

### **Tip 9: Establish night-time routines as early as possible**

Newborn babies sleeping patterns are very unlikely to fit in with your own need for sleep and during this time, a parent really does have to follow their needs and wants, no matter what the time of day or night it is. However, babies need to be on a strict schedule from very early on if you want to get them sleeping through the night.

After a few weeks, babies do start to have more of a pattern on when they wake and feed, etc. From 3 or 4 months, establishing a proper bedtime routine is essential to try and avoid problems as they get older. Children need structure and balance in order to sleep well each and every night. That is why you should have a time of night that you put your child down. Do not simply wait for them to get tired before you put them to bed, have a time and stick to it. This is the best way to get your child sleeping through the night quickly and easily.

Good nighttime rituals can really help you to get your baby / child to sleep at night. For example, you may want to give your child a warm and soothing bath at night before bed. This can go along way towards relaxing them enough that they will go to sleep with ease when put to bed. Children like rituals and routine and these kinds are great. Doing the same things, in the same order and at the same times can really help your baby to settle. As your child gets older, although what you do may change over time, the same principal remains the same to help them settle.

### **Tip 10: Bedtime should be a calm and quiet time**

It is also a very good idea for you allow the evening to unfold quietly. Playing games with them just before bed is probably not the best way to go. Instead of wearing out your child, playing games is only going to get them riled up. This is not going to help you get them to sleep each night. You need to get your child calm and relaxed.

Having a ticking clock or some other steady sound in the room with him or her might be what is missing in their bedtime routine. Try having these kinds of sounds in the room with your child and watch the difference they can make.

Always put your baby / child to bed awake and try to leave the room before they fall asleep so that if they stir during the night, they will be familiar with their surroundings.

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