



Young Babies Sleep



What can I do in the early few weeks to help my baby sleep?

It is our internal 24-hour body clock, circadian rhythm, that tells us when to sleep, when to wake and when to eat. Our brain uses light in the day to reset our internal body clock and at night it is darkness that helps our body know it's time for sleep.

Babies in the dark environment of the womb do not have light to help signal the difference between night and day; in fact research has shown for the majority of your pregnancy your baby will be asleep. It isn't until your last trimester that your baby will have some brief periods of two or three hours per day, awake.

Before birth it is your movement and your melatonin, which comes via the placenta, which helps to regulate your unborn baby's sleep. At birth, your newborn baby must develop both their own body clock and hormone production. Until this takes place, over the next 3 months, their nights and days will simply blend together.

Your newborn baby will spend on average 16 hours a day sleeping with their sleep split roughly 50:50 between the day and night. Naturally your baby's sleep is governed by their tiny tummies and their need to feed and so their sleep episodes will be brief, waking every 2-3 hours for milk.

But by ten weeks most babies will have developed the ability to tell the difference between day and night, and by three months they will be sleeping much longer at night than the day.



Furthermore, they will have the ability to sleep in longer chunks at night of perhaps five or six hours.

To help maximise your sleep in the first few weeks, your young baby's bedtime will be the same as yours. But as the balance of your baby's sleep alters and they sleep less in the day and more over night, their bedtime will slowly shift earlier until they reach 3 to 4 months old and can have a regular evening bedtime.

Teach your baby the difference between night and day.



As light has the biggest influence on our body clock, help your baby start the process of concentrating their sleep into the night by taking them outside everyday for fresh air and a dose of daylight.

During the day immerse your baby in the hustle and bustle of normal life spending time interacting with and stimulating them, studies have shown newborns who were active at the same time of day as their mothers were quicker to develop their body clock.

For daytime naps, put your baby in their Moses basket or cot, but leave the curtains open and don't try to minimise noise.

By contrast at night, keep the bedroom dark. And during night feeds avoid over stimulating your baby by keeping your voice low and eye contact minimal. Only change nappies if it's really necessary.

Combining the effects of daytime light with the soporific effects of darkness you will help your baby on the journey to learning that night time is for sleeping.



Children's
Sleep Clinic

www.millpondsleepclinic.com
sleep@millpondsleepclinic.com
020 8444 0040



By 12 weeks your baby's own melatonin production aids their sleep and their day-night rhythms fully appear.

How to create a bedtime routine for your baby:



Establishing a bedtime routine that encompasses multisensory stimulation has been clinically proven to increase the quantity and duration of your baby's sleep and result in fewer sleep problems.

Your bedtime routine should consist of various activities designed to gently stimulate all your baby's senses and should be followed in the same order on a nightly basis before sleep. Research shows the younger a routine is initiated, the better.

Begin your baby's bedtime routine with a warm bath, followed by a massage, then some quiet time, such as reading a book or singing a lullaby.

Such a routine combines all the multisensory benefits of gentle stimulation:

- Tactile -skin-to-skin contact during a bath and massage time
- Visual- direct eye contact
- Auditory- parent's voice
- Smell-familiar scents of mum or dad



Children's
Sleep Clinic

www.millpondsleepclinic.com
sleep@millpondsleepclinic.com
020 8444 0040



Look for sleep cues and happy napping



For the first few weeks there's likely to be very little pattern to your baby's sleep, this is the time to get to know your baby and learn about their sleep cues.

Often the very first sign your baby needs sleep is when they become quiet and still after a period of wakefulness. This is the time to reduce stimulation and start settling your baby to sleep. Some babies are very subtle in their cues meaning it can be easy to miss their first signs of tiredness. Your baby may then move on to yawning, to crying and become fractious and hard to settle. Your baby will find it much easier to fall asleep if you are able to respond to those early sleep cues.

By the end of your baby's first month, a napping pattern typically emerges with babies needing a nap every 1.5 – 2 hrs. It's worth keeping a simple diary of your baby's feed and sleep times so you can spot if a pattern is beginning to emerge.

By four weeks of age, a baby will typically sleep for a total of six to seven hours during the day and eight to nine at night.

By three months, your baby is likely to sleep on average 10-11 hours at night and around four hours in the day; waking regularly for feeds over night.

Sleep cues-

Babies are very good communicators; long before your baby talks she will use non-verbal cues to tell you what she wants. Your baby may have very subtle sleep cues and go quickly from being happy and playful to being tired and fussy.



Children's
Sleep Clinic

www.millpondsleepclinic.com
sleep@millpondsleepclinic.com
020 8444 0040



Here are some of signs of tiredness you will see in your baby:

- Whining or fussing
- Staring blankly into space
- Frowning
- Jerky arms and legs
- Arching of back
- Clenched fists
- Yawning
- Rubs eyes
- Pulling at ears
- Sucking on fingers or fist
- Ignoring interaction and losing interest

Reducing stimulation-

1. Calming your baby-

Your child's brain grows and develops at a phenomenal rate; faster in their first two years are the most than at any other time in their lives. The experiences that promote this process begin immediately- the things she hears, sees, touches, smells and tastes stimulate her brain to create billions of new pathways.

Ensuring your baby has a stimulating environment will give her lots of opportunities to learn and develop. But this needs to be balanced with quiet, calm time in familiar settings and predictable routines.

If your baby becomes fussy and hard to calm, offer her tactile stimulation. Take her to a quiet room and hold, gently rock, stroke and sing to your baby. Talking out loud to her, wondering what may be wrong with your baby helps her feel she is being listened to from an early age. Integrating these approaches leads to highly calming hormones being released, laying down the foundation for good self-regulation.

2. Soothing your young baby to sleep-

By helping your baby feel safe and secure you can increase the chance of a better night's sleep. Some babies are soothed by white noise especially as the womb was a noisy place. There are free white noise apps on phones or gently singing, humming or shushing works just as well.



Children's
Sleep Clinic

www.millpondsleepclinic.com
sleep@millpondsleepclinic.com
020 8444 0040



Young babies are also soothed by smell and find it comforting to be cuddled or rocked to sleep in the early weeks especially if they are agitated. From around 4-6 weeks start trying to put your baby down drowsy rather than fully asleep, keeping an eye on the time and to look out for sleep cues to avoid your baby being over tired and harder to settle.

Then when you are ready, help your baby to understand that having a quiet and winding down bedtime bath and being gently dressed in the evening means it's nearly time to sleep.

Breast feeds:



During the early weeks, your baby will naturally fall asleep feeding

Studies have shown an amino acid found in breast milk can help with your baby's sleep. This amino acid, called tryptophan, is converted in the body to melatonin. Levels of tryptophan in breast milk fall in the day and rise at night in line with the mother's body clock. Giving your baby tryptophan, through your breast milk, has shown to help baby's fall asleep faster and to synchronise with the 24 hour day.

Baby massage-

Giving your baby a massage as part of their bedtime routine will not only help to relax and soothe your baby but could also help with their sleep. Research has shown, after a month, babies massaged with lotion fell asleep faster, stayed asleep longer and woke less during the night.

This article was written by:

Mandy Gurney

RGN.RM.Dip HV

Founder Millpond Sleep Clinic



Children's
Sleep Clinic

www.millpondsleepclinic.com
sleep@millpondsleepclinic.com
020 8444 0040

