

6+
MONTHS

Settling Your Baby





Introduction

As a parent, you know your baby needs to sleep, but it can sometimes be challenging to make it happen! All babies have their own individual sleep needs and patterns, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach. This brochure has been developed to provide support, guidance and tips on recognising when your baby is tired and encouraging them to go to sleep. If you have any concerns, be sure to speak to a healthcare professional.



Why Is Sleep Important?

Sleep is an essential, healthy part of your baby's life. Good sleeping habits are crucial for:

- brain development
- helping to conserve energy and re-energise
- supporting growth and immune function

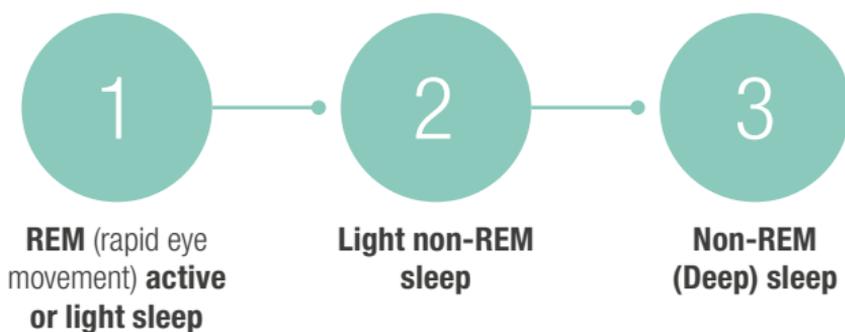
Overtired babies can be grizzly, irritable and hard to please. This makes it harder for parents to begin settling their babies to help them relax and sleep.

What Is My Baby's Sleep Cycle?

A sleep cycle is the period of time your baby spends transitioning through the phases of light and deep sleep. Each baby's sleep cycle is variable, but generally can last up to 50 minutes. This is different to an adult, where it is closer to 90 minutes.



THERE ARE THREE MAIN STAGES OF SLEEP:



REM SLEEP

Some researchers believe that REM sleep is important for brain development. Babies in the REM phase of sleep will flutter their eyes, move their fingers and toes, and can be easily woken. They may also cry out, move around and be quite noisy. This is the sleep stage where dreaming usually occurs. For the first 3 months of life, babies spend most of their time in REM sleep.

DID YOU KNOW?
REM sleep accounts for about half of a baby's sleep cycle, but only a quarter of an adult's.

NON-REM SLEEP

When babies go into non-REM (deep) sleep, they progressively become less active and breathing slows down. It is normal for babies to wake briefly after phases of deep sleep. They then go back into light sleep if everything is how it is expected to be.

WAKING UP

Babies wake up far more often than adults do. Because of the relative shortness of their sleep cycles, they rarely follow predictable patterns of long hours of sleep without some waking. Hunger, as well as the transition from one sleep cycle to another, may cause a baby to wake. If your baby wakes and they're used to having your help to settle them (i.e. with feeding, rocking, soothing), they'll need these same cues/prompts to fall back to sleep.



How Much Sleep Does My Baby Need?

All babies have their own unique, individual needs for sleep. Their age and stage of development, activity and temperament may impact on how much sleep they will need each day. The younger the baby, the more sleep they need. Some babies simply need more sleep than others. And all babies need some sleep during the day, no matter how hard they might try to convince you otherwise!

Sleep is not static, and therefore can reflect other changes that are going on in a baby's life. Babies who are thriving and getting enough nutrition generally have better sleeping habits than those who aren't.



SOME GUIDELINES FOR SLEEP REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE:

-  Newborns generally sleep between 9 and 16 hours every 24 hours. They may wake up when they're hungry and may settle more easily after feeding.
-  After 3 weeks of age, they may be awake for longer periods throughout the day, and sleep for around 8 hours overnight.
-  By 3 months, there is often more of a pattern to their day/night waking and feeding. Typically, babies have 2 or 3 daytime sleeps of about 2 hours. Some babies may sleep for around 8 hours overnight. However be prepared to be woken by your baby, who may still need night feeds.
-  When preparing your baby to sleep, make sure they are comfortable and not hungry or over/underdressed.

The following tables are intended as a guide only.

Every baby is unique and will have their own individual needs for feeding and sleeping. You are encouraged to be flexible and realistic in your expectations of your baby's behaviour, and understand that each day's awake/sleep pattern may be different.

Age of baby	Sleep cycles over 24 hours
0–3 months	Newborns average 9–20 hours sleep over 24 hours By 3 months, night-time sleeps may be up to 8 hours.
3–6 months	Average 15–16 hours over 24 hours 2–3 daytime sleeps of ~2 hours 9–10 hours overnight
6–12 months	14–15 hours over 24 hours 2–3 daytime sleeps of 1–2 hours Up to 10 hours.
1–2 years	13–14 hours over 24 hours ~2 daytime sleeps or 1 long daytime sleep
2–3 years	May require a late morning or afternoon nap 1 sleep a day of varying lengths

Awake cycles over 24 hours	Signs of tiredness
<p>May become tired 1–1.5 hours after waking</p>	<p>Grizzling, clenched fists, irritability, jerky movements of arms and legs</p> <p>Trouble focusing on other people's faces, will look away and scrunch up their own face</p>
<p>Shows signs of tiredness 1.5–2 hours after waking</p>	<p>Same as above, though may have a louder cry</p> <p>May look to parent for cuddles and want to be held and soothed</p>
<p>Shows signs of tiredness 2–3 hours after waking</p>	<p>Clumsy, irritable, rubbing eyes, crying and fussing</p> <p>Difficult to keep entertained, due to shorter concentration span</p>
<p>More wakeful throughout the day Awake for 3–4 hours between sleeps</p>	<p>Grizzling, clumsy and becoming clingy</p> <p>May show disinterest or fussiness with food</p>
<p>Awake for longer periods of time</p>	<p>May say they're tired</p> <p>Demands attention and prone to temper tantrums</p> <p>Cannot be distracted with toys</p>



What Signs Of Tiredness Should I Be Aware Of?

Babies will often show tired signs after feeding, when they are content and have a stomach full of milk. This can be the best time to place them in their cot. Feeling calm and well-fed encourages them to sleep.

There are some classic signs that demonstrate a baby's tiredness, despite their best efforts to hide them sometimes. Signs can include:

- crying in a quieter, more grizzly tone that stops and starts
- yawning, pulling faces, grimacing and looking away
- rubbing their eyes or ears, wanting to feed more or snuggle into your arms
- in young babies, jerky movements, clenched fists, a high-pitched cry, frowning or appearing angry, trouble focusing.

Learning these tired signs and responding quickly can help teach your baby how to self-settle, and prevent them from becoming overtired or distressed.

How Can I Settle My Baby To Sleep?

Parents have many choices about ways to settle their baby, and some of them are explained below. Choose what suits you both and experiment with different strategies. There is no one right way that applies to every parent and every baby. However, consistency with settling techniques is important and will help your baby develop good sleeping habits.

SETTLING TECHNIQUES

	Description	Suitable for
Setting in arms	Hold your baby until they fall asleep.	All infants, but ideally younger babies or parents who find it challenging to be separated from their baby.
Hands-on settling	Put your baby in their cot sleepy but still awake; then place your hands gently on their chest, tummy or legs, and stay with them until they are calm or fall asleep.	If you want to change your baby's dependency on being cuddled to sleep.
Comfort settling	Put your baby in their cot sleepy but still awake; leave your baby when they are quiet for short periods of time and return to comfort as needed until they fall asleep.	Encouraging babies aged over 6 months to go to sleep on their own.
Parental presence	Sit or lie down next to your baby's cot, and stay in the same room until they are asleep.	Babies aged over 6 months who are not used to being separated at sleep time.

Many babies enjoy being patted gently and rhythmically when they are going to sleep. Some like having their head or face stroked, gentle cot-rocking or being sung to. If they're distressed and crying, hearing a repetitive 'shh shh shh' sound can also be soothing.

When settling your baby, it's important for you to try to stay calm and focused on your own emotions. The aim is to try and bring baby down from an aroused, alert state to one of calm and peace. If your baby senses your tension, they may not feel safe and calm enough to go to sleep.

TOP TIP

- **Sleep associations are cues or prompts that may help babies go to sleep. Common sleep associations are feeding, rocking and pacifiers (dummies). These methods can help your baby feel safe and comfortable.**
- **It's never too early to start gentle, predictable, wind-down routines before settling your baby to sleep. Patterns of loving and sensitive care help to boost feelings of security in infants and assist their emotional development.**
- **Dummies, music and darkening the room are useful as calming measures if you don't feel the need to stay with your baby until they go to sleep. These sleep associations are easy and don't need you to be as "hands on".**
- **Wrapping/swaddling young babies helps them settle and sleep on their back. It also has a calming effect and helps promote sustained sleep.**
- **Reading stories to your baby helps them wind down from the day's activities. It is also great for building literacy skills, and a wonderful way to spend quiet time with your baby.**

Babies can learn new sleep associations if the ones they are used to need to change. Like any habit, it can take weeks before old patterns of behaviour are replaced with new ones. Time, patience, consistency, confidence and persistence from parents always make a positive difference.

What If My Baby Just Won't Go To Sleep?

Unfortunately, there will be times when your baby will not want to go to sleep despite everything you try. When this happens, it may help to pick them up and try something else to calm them:

- go for a walk
- bathe or massage them
- listen to some music
- ask someone else for help.

Remember, try to remain positive and just do your best.



Setting Realistic Expectations

Ultimately, you can't control whether your baby goes to sleep or how long they will sleep for. These outcomes are entirely up to them. However, the more you understand about babies' behaviour and sleep patterns, the more realistic your expectations can be for your own baby.

- About 80% of healthy, thriving babies have at least one episode of unexplained crying daily.
- Babies who are sick or recovering from an illness often have disrupted sleep patterns.
- Changes to your baby's routine, such as holidays or moving house, can affect their sleep.
- Young babies need their parents' help to regulate their emotions, so rocking, soothing, cuddling and comforting are important to help them transition from being awake to sleeping.
- Siblings don't necessarily have the same sleep patterns, so what worked for one of your children may not work for others.
- Persistent or recurring sleep problems can be common, which you may find challenging if you previously felt confident in predicting your baby's needs.

Realistically, you may need to try different settling techniques. But it's important to be consistent and patient, and don't expect too much, too soon. You may also benefit from looking at your own behaviour, and how it may be influencing your baby's sleep. For example, if you are tense or angry, your baby may sense this and it could impact their sleeping behaviour.

Safe Sleeping Guidelines

- ✓ It is recommended that babies sleep in their own safe sleeping place in the same room as an adult caregiver during the first 6 to 12 months. Provide a safe sleeping environment for your baby both night and day.
- ✓ Babies should sleep on their back from birth, not on their tummy or side. Wrapping is a useful method to help babies settle and sleep on their backs. Keep pillows, doonas, quilts, lambswool, bumpers and soft toys out of cots. Don't use waterbeds or bean bags, as these are unsafe sleeping places for babies and toddlers.
- ✓ Babies need to sleep with their heads and faces uncovered. Keep wraps, bonnets, blankets and sheets clear from your baby's face.
- ✓ Don't let your baby get too hot. Make sure the room is not overheated.
- ✓ Avoid exposing your baby to tobacco smoke, both before and after birth. This is especially important in the house and in the car. Babies who sleep with their parents in the same bed have a higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) if their parents are smokers.
- ✓ Use a firm, flat (not tilted or elevated), safe, clean mattress. Look for a cot that allows the mattress to fit firmly into the cot sides, and make sure the bedding is safe. All cots, including second-hand ones, should meet the Australian Standard for Cots. It is important to look for the label that shows this.
- ✓ Tuck blankets in firmly or use a safe baby sleeping bag.

For more information
specific to your baby's age,
visit meandmychild.com.au

Important Statement:

Breastfeeding is best for babies. It has benefits for the infant, such as reducing infection risk, and for the mother. It is important to have a healthy balanced diet in preparation for, and during breastfeeding. Infant formula is designed to replace breast milk when an infant is not breastfed. Breastfeeding can be negatively affected by introducing partial bottle-feeding, and reversing a decision not to breastfeed is difficult. Infant formula must be prepared and used as directed. Unnecessary or improper use of infant formula, such as not properly boiling water or sterilising feeding equipment, may make your baby ill. Social and financial implications, including preparation time and the cost of formula, should be considered when selecting a method of infant feeding.



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