

# Sleep

by Blackpool Teaching Hospitals - Tuesday, January 10, 2012

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Sleep is important for your baby as it allows the brain and body to rest and renew themselves for the coming day.

## Sleep facts

- Sleep has three phases – light, deep and dream sleep.
- Dream sleep is known as rapid eye movement (REM) because the eyes move in bursts of activity.
- In a newborn baby REM sleep may be identified by baby ‘twitching’ in their sleep, irregular breathing, sometimes a brief smile, and often their eyes dart about under the eyelids. In the period of deeper sleep, breathing becomes heavier, baby will lie very still and you may see fast ‘sucking’ motions.

## How much sleep will my baby need?

How often a baby sleeps and for how long varies from child to child, but as a rough guide you can expect the following:

Age	Hours Sleep	Intervals
Newborn	16 – 17 hours	About 7 sleep periods in 24 hours
3 months	14 – 15 hours	4 – 5 sleep periods in 24 hours
6 – 8 months	13 – 14 hours	Mainly at night with periods of waking and 1 – 2 naps during the day of about an hour
1 year	13 hours	About 11 hours a night and 2 during the day
2 years	13 hours	Mostly overnight with one day time nap

## Caring for yourself!

It can be a tiring and difficult job caring for a baby and this is made worse if you are being kept from your sleep at night. It is therefore important that you look after yourself and the following tips may help:

- Grab the opportunity of a nap when your baby has one!
- Ask your partner to take turns in going to your baby at night or to take over at weekends.
- Take time out by asking family or friends to help with chores or to babysit.
- Try and ensure you eat a healthy diet and take some exercise as exercise can help reduce stress and increase energy levels.
- Don't struggle alone. Meet up with family, friends or attend a baby group. This can help you feel less isolated and be a source of support.

***Lastly remember that you are doing your best and it will get better!***

## **The first few months**

In the early weeks of your baby's life he will wake at different times when he is hungry, needs changing or wants attention. However a routine will gradually develop as he grows and becomes more settled.

### **How to help with developing routines:**

- Put him in his cot or Moses basket just before he falls asleep, at least once a day. This will begin to get him used to going to sleep without the need for contact from you.
- Establish routines for bedtime.
- Regular bath times and quiet activities before bed, such as reading a story.
- For daytime naps it is a good idea to get your baby used to going in his cot so that he gets to know that this is the place for sleep.

### **Coping with babies who don't settle to sleep:**

From about the age of 6 months most babies will go without a night feed. However, if you find your baby still needs a night-time feed, try to do it with as little fuss as possible. This will help your baby realise that night-time is not for playtime!

If you have trouble getting your baby to sleep at night there are two methods which can help your baby to learn to fall asleep on his own.

### **Controlled crying**

This may seem a little harsh at first but it is important that you stick to it and you will achieve results!

- When you have put the baby to bed and he starts to cry leave him for about 5 minutes.

- Go to him and settle him down again, but do not pick him up or offer a feed unless absolutely necessary.
- Leave again. If he continues to cry, leave him for about 10 minutes this time before you go back in to him. Settle him down again but avoid eye contact and try not to talk to him.
- If he cries again leave a gap of 15 minutes.

Continue in this way building up the time intervals over several days.

For example:

Night	1 <sup>st</sup> Check	2 <sup>nd</sup> Check	3 <sup>rd</sup> Check	All other Checks
1	5 mins	10 mins	15 mins	15 mins
2	10 mins	15 mins	20 mins	20 mins
3	15 mins	20 mins	25 mins	25 mins
4	20 mins	25 mins	30 mins	30 mins

You will know the length of time you are happy to leave your baby to cry. Your baby will begin to learn that crying in this way will not gain your attention and will become used to settling back to sleep.

## Gradual withdrawal

This is an alternative approach to use if you are unsure about the controlled crying method.

- Settle your baby down to sleep and stay close. If he won't sleep, reassure and calm him and lay him back down. Repeat as necessary until he goes to sleep.
- When he gets used to going to sleep on his own, sit on a chair close by until he is asleep.
- After a few days move the chair away from the cot.
- When he is able to settle with you sitting close to the door you can begin to take time out of the room building up the time you spend out of the room.
- This may take a couple of weeks.

**If you would like any further information or support whilst you establish sleep routines please contact your Health Visitor.**