

Sleep and Your Infant

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Facts:

- Infants (2 -12 months) require a total of 14-15 hours of sleep per day. That includes naps and overnight sleep.
- Your infant should sleep about 9-10 hours at night, and she should nap about 5 hours during the day. More detailed averages are in the table below:

Age	Total Number of Hours	Number of Hours at Night	Number of Hours in the Day	Number of Daytime Naps
1 week	16 ½	8 ½	8	4
1 month	15 ½	9	6 ½	3
3 months	15	10	5	3
6 months	14 ½	11	3 ¼	2
9 months	14	11 ¼	2 ¾	2
12 months	13 ¾	11 ½	2 ¼	2

- Babies should be placed on their backs to sleep.
- All infants and children awaken 2-6 times throughout the night. Those who can soothe themselves back to sleep will do so fairly quickly.
- Most infants can go without nighttime feedings after about 6 months.

Okay, so how do I begin establishing good sleep habits in my infant?

- **Maintain as consistent a schedule as possible for naptimes and bedtimes.**
 - Having a regular routine reduces a baby's stress and helps her know what to expect each day.
 - In addition, consistency helps babies learn the difference between night and day. During the day, try to avoid darkening the room, and do not reduce noise levels. Also, do not let your child nap longer than 3 hours during the day.
 - Naps are important! Studies show that babies who nap during the day sleep better at night. So, do not keep your baby awake in the hopes that she will sleep all night; better rested babies have an easier time settling in to sleep during the night.
- **Follow approximately the same bedtime/naptime routine each time.** Yes, every time. Choose what works for you and your child. For example, at bedtime many parents follow the "four Bs": bath, bottle, book, bed. At naptime, you can do bottle, book, bed, for example (a shorter version of the bedtime routine). The goal is to help your baby unwind and send his body the message that it needs to prepare for sleeping. So, choose quiet, relaxing activities.
 - Think about it: You also follow a routine each night. You brush your teeth, put on pajamas, read, etc., and your body winds down for sleep. (If you don't have a routine, consider adopting one!)
- **Keep the bedroom environment consistent each night and during naps.**
 - For example, if you run a fan or humidifier, use it consistently. As another example, you should keep the temperature about the same.

- **Put your baby to bed drowsy, but awake.**
 - Your baby should learn to put herself to sleep, so that when she wakes during the night, she doesn't need you to put her back to sleep.
 - Calmly say "good night," then leave. Ignore whining and protesting.
 - Avoid feeding your baby to sleep. Try to feed your infant earlier in the evening, so that he does not associate feeding with sleep.
- **Do not let your child sleep with you.**
 - This arrangement can make it harder for him to fall asleep when he is alone. Also, you may disturb each other during the night, which can make sleep more restless for both of you.
- **You may choose to encourage your infant to adopt a security object** (blankie, lovey, stuffed animal, etc.) to help comfort himself and prepare for sleeping.
 - If your child becomes attached to a particular object, consider keeping a spare one on hand, just in case it becomes lost, damaged, or needs to go in the washing machine!
 - Make sure the object is safe. Look for ribbons, buttons, or other parts that may be choking hazards. Stuffing or pellets inside stuffed toys also can be dangerous.
- **Do not immediately return to your baby's room every time he awakens during the night.** These tips become more important as your baby gets older. Try the following:
 - Wait several seconds before answering and make your response time longer each time he fusses. This will give him a chance to fall asleep on his own.
 - Reassure your baby that you are there. If you need to go into the room, do not turn on the light, play with him, or stay too long.
- **Give it time.** Helping your baby develop good sleep habits can be a challenge and it is normal to get upset when you are being kept awake at night. Try to be understanding. A negative response by a parent can sometimes make a sleep problem worse!

How can I take care of myself?

- **Rest when you have the opportunity.**
 - Even if you can't nap when your baby is napping, do try to rest quietly for a few minutes.
- **Make sure that your own needs are being met.**
 - Try to do at least one thing every day that you enjoy. For example, you might take a walk, have a relaxing bath, or read your favorite magazine. Even a few minutes can make all the difference.
- **Be realistic about how much you can accomplish each day.**
 - Face it: The house does not have to be spotless, and you are only human! Lower your expectations, and seek out assistance when you can!

If you would like additional information regarding sleep, consult the AAP and Sleep Foundation websites below. The book *Sleeping through the Night* by Dr. Jodi Mindell is highly recommended as well, and it contains sleep information for adults as well as infants, toddlers, and children.

Sources:

- American Academy of Pediatrics. (2007). *Sleep problems in children*. Retrieved January 28, 2009 from <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/Sleep.cfm>.
- Mindell, J.A. (2005). *Sleeping through the night: How infants, toddlers, and their parents can get a good night's sleep*. New York: Harper Collins.
- National Sleep Foundation. URL: <http://www.sleepfoundation.org>.
- Turner, K.M.T., Markie-Dadds, C., Sanders, M.R. (1996). *Triple P tip sheet series for infants*. Brisbane: Families International Publishing.