

Baby Sleep

What you should know about infant sleep patterns

When it comes to sleeping, each baby is different.

It's common for babies to sleep about 15 or 16 hours a day. But some sleep as few as 12 hours and others sleep as long as 19 hours a day.

Usually, the longest a 2-week-old infant will sleep at a time is 3 to 5 hours. By 4 months, many babies will sleep a full 8 hours at a time. But some 4-month-olds sleep as little as 5 hours at a time and others as long as 12 hours at a time.

Many parents worry about their baby's sleep. It's not unusual to compare your baby's sleeping pattern to the sleeping patterns of other babies. And it's not unusual for you to want your baby to sleep like an angel through the night.

But babies don't always sleep the way you want them to. Understanding how babies sleep may put you more at ease.

On Back

Your baby's sleep patterns and things you should know about trying to change them.

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You & Your Child



What you should know about infant sleep patterns

How babies are put to bed can help make them sleep more safely

Young infants should be placed on their backs for sleep.

Babies should sleep on firm surface without pillows, comforters, or soft stuffed animals.

Taking these steps will help reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Once a sleeper, not always a sleeper

Babies who sleep well at first don't always continue to sleep well when they get older.

About half of the babies who once slept through the night begin to wake up in the middle of the night a few months later.

Sleeping pattern is related to your baby's development

From birth to about 6 months of age, your baby's sleep patterns reflect his or her biological development.

Babies that age cannot resist falling asleep when they are tired. And they cannot stay asleep when they are hungry.

When your young baby is awake, it is usually because he or she isn't tired or is hungry.

If you must change your baby's sleep schedule:

- Wake your baby early rather than delay a feeding.
- To encourage sleep, rock your baby or provide some soothing sounds, like singing, quiet talking, or a music box.
- Don't expect miracles.
- If you can, wait until your baby is at least 6 months old before trying to change his or her schedule. It is usually easier to change an older baby's schedule.

Stress can slow your baby's progress

Babies who had a difficult birth, such as premature babies, may take a little longer to get to the point where they are able to sleep through the night.

Also, if your baby's daytime environment is very busy and stressful, he or she may take a little longer to start sleeping through the night.

Let your baby sleep when he or she wants to sleep

It's a good idea not to try to force your baby into some kind of sleeping pattern.

If you can, let your baby sleep when he or she feels like sleeping. Try to relax and enjoy the quiet hours. And be patient with your baby's sleeping habits.

Try setting a bedtime ritual

Many parents adopt a bedtime ritual as a way of getting their babies to follow a certain sleeping pattern. This ritual is something you and your baby do just before bedtime. It signals to your child that bedtime is approaching.

Do things that are calming to your baby, like singing softly or reading. Hugs and kisses may help ease your child into sleep, too.

Be calm and loving

Be calm and loving. But down is down.

If your baby wakes in the middle of the night, try to keep him or her in bed, if possible.

Try restarting your ritual or do some other calming thing, such as patting your baby softly, or talking to your baby quietly until he or she falls back asleep.

