



Healthy Sleeping Habits

Sleep is very important to your baby's health and well-being. In fact, good sleep habits start from birth. All babies are different, and their sleep patterns can change a lot in the first year so try not compare how your baby sleeps with other babies.

HOW MUCH SLEEP DOES YOUR BABY NEED?

Although there is no "one-size-fits-all" answer, there's no question, newborns and infants require a lot of sleep! Factors that influence how long a baby sleeps can vary and could include things such as amount of time exposed to natural light or whether your baby is breastfed. Below are guidelines to help new parents figure out what's best for their child.

NEWBORNS

During the first months, a full-term, healthy newborn will require a total of 14 to 17 hours per 24-hour day period. Because of needs, such as frequent feedings, newborns will sleep no longer than 2 to 4 hours at a time. A typical newborn should get 8 to 12 hours of sleep at night with intermittent feedings and 2 to 5 naps throughout the day. Because newborns do not know how to soothe themselves to sleep, rocking, breastfeeding, using a pacifier, and swaddling are ways to help your baby get back to sleep.

4 - 11 MONTH OLD BABIES

At this age, babies still need 12 to 15 hours of sleep per day and begin to develop longer stretches of sleep known as "sleeping through the night." In this age range, many infants will start sleeping more at nighttime and less during the day.

Most infants will develop separation anxiety around 6 months of age which may lead to increased crying and the need for attention and soothing. This is also the same time, luckily, that babies learn how to get themselves back to sleep with self-soothing.

It's okay to check on your crying baby, just keep the visit short and try to not pick them up – as hard as that may be. You can comfort him/her by rubbing the baby's back or singing a lullaby for a few minutes.

GETTING YOUR BABY ON A SLEEP SCHEDULE

Exposing your baby to lots of daylight during the day and avoiding over-stimulation at night will get your infant on a good sleep routine. In addition to feeding frequently, newborns have not yet developed the genetic timing mechanism in their brain that controls sleep. Therefore, there is no typical sleep pattern for newborns.

At 3 to 6 months old, a calming before bedtime ritual like a bath, feeding or story time is recommended to help your baby sleep through the night. Putting the baby down while still drowsy, but not actually sleeping, is best. Although this may not work for every infant, it's worth trying. This way, your baby will get used to falling asleep on their own and not in your arms. To improve your child's sleep, increase bedtime feedings if your baby is older and still waking up in the night to feed.

Be aware of nap time and try to limit to no more than 3 hours. Avoid letting your little one nap past 4 pm. Those who sleep past 4 pm may not be ready to sleep at their scheduled bedtime. Most babies can learn to sleep well at an early age if good sleep habits are started right away.

The information contained here within is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read.

If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor, go to the emergency department, or call 911 immediately. GemCare Wellness (GCW) does not recommend or endorse any specific tests, physicians, products, procedures, opinions, or other information that may be mentioned here within. Reliance on any information provided by GCW, GCW employees, contracted writers, or medical professionals presenting content for publication here within is solely at your own risk.

Resources:

- *Healthy Sleep Habits for Infants and Toddlers.* Nationwide Children's Hospital. <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/helping-hands/healthy-sleep-habits-for-infants-and-toddlers>. Accessed July 26, 2019.
- *How Much Sleep Do Babies Need.* Sleep.org. <http://www.sleep.org/articles/how-much-sleep-do-babies-need/>. Accessed July 26, 2019.
- *What to Expect Editors. Establishing a Bedtime Routine for Baby and Getting Baby on a Sleep Schedule. What to Expect.* <http://www.whattoexpect.com/first-year/baby-sleep-schedule.aspx>. Published December 17, 2018. Accessed July 26, 2019.

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