

UNDERSTANDING SLEEP

Newborn to 12 months

Understanding Sleep

Falling asleep occurs when your baby is in a relaxed state and physically needs sleep. There are many factors that can affect your baby's ability to fall asleep. As a parent you can help by creating a safe and calm environment and meeting your baby's physical needs. This brochure will help you understand your baby's sleep.



Sleep Needs

Sleep needs vary from child to child. As babies get older they require less sleep and are able to stay awake for longer before tiring.

Birth to 6 weeks - average sleep can vary between 12 - 20 hours per 24 hours for a newborn. Awake time may only be around 1 hour.

6 weeks to 3 months - awake time is about 1 - 1½ hours and sleep time is about 1½ - 2½ hours.

3- 6 months - awake time is about 1½ - 2½ hours and sleep time is about 1½ - 2½ hours.

6- 9 months - awake time is about 2½ - 3 hours with 2 day sleeps of about 1½ - 2 hours.

9- 12 months - awake time is about 3 - 4 hours

Routines and Associations

Routines are beneficial for all ages. Predictability helps your baby feel safe and secure and promotes winding down for sleep.

It is better to feed your baby after waking up. Babies that are fed just before sleep can come to depend on a feed to fall asleep as they get older.

Babies learn to associate certain things with winding down to sleep. Some things you can try are:

- Warm bath before night time sleep
- Being wrapped
- Story time or quiet play before bed
- Music



Tired Signs

Your ability to recognise your baby's verbal and non-verbal cues will develop over time as you learn to communicate with each other.

Common Tired Signs

- Staring into the distance
- Losing interest in people and toys
- Sucking on fingers
- Fussing and whining
- Jerky movements
- Clenching fists
- Eye rubbing or yawning
- Frowning
- Crying
- Arching back

Responding to Tired Signs

When your baby starts to show tired signs, it's time for bed. Babies can change quickly from being active and alert to being tired. When they get to the crying stage, they are already 'overtired'. An overtired baby will find it much harder to sleep.

If tired signs are not responded to, your baby will usually progress to crying and protesting, as if fighting against going to sleep.

Keeping your baby up during the day is unlikely to make the night time sleep easier or longer.

SAFE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

Follow the recommendation of SIDS and Kids:

1. Sleep baby **on the back** from birth, not on the tummy or side.
2. Sleep baby with **head and face uncovered**.
3. Keep baby in a **smoke free environment** before and after birth.
4. Provide a **safe sleeping environment**.
5. Sleep baby in their own **safe sleeping place** in the **same room as an adult caregiver** for the first six to twelve months.
6. **Breastfeed** baby if possible.



What is a safe sleeping place?

To create a safe sleeping place and ensure that your baby can breath freely:

- Make sure your cot or bassinette meets the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 2172)
- Have a firm, well fitting mattress
- Have a breathable mattress, blankets and covers
- Remove the plastic cover from the mattress
- Don't have bumpers (cot surrounds) or toys in the cot
- Sleep your baby on his or her back
- Have your baby's feet at the bottom of the cot
- Make sure the blankets are tucked in firmly
- Make sure there are no cords or drawstrings (e.g. from blinds or curtains) within reach

Sleep Cycles

All adults and children have sleep cycles. A sleep cycle is the stages of sleep we go through during our sleep.

We move from drowsy to light, to deep, to deeper, and finally restless sleep and cycle again if needed. The diagram below shows how a typical sleep is made up of 2 separate sleep cycles.



Babies sleep cycles vary from 20 – 60 minutes (adult cycles are around 90 minutes).

Some babies have trouble moving from one sleep cycle to the next. You may need to help them resettle, until they are able to do it themselves. If your baby is restless, wait, watch and work out if your baby can resettle before deciding to get your baby up.

Is it safe to share a sleep surface?

It is not recommended that adults and babies share a sleep surface, particularly due to the risk of suffocation. More information about this can be found on the SIDS and Kids website.

For Twins

The safest way for twins to sleep is in their own safe sleeping place. It is not recommended to have them sleep in the same cot or bassinette.

If you must have twins in the same cot, place them at opposite ends rather than side by side