

Infant sleeping tricks and information

- 1. Consistent bedtimes and rituals.** Babies who enjoy consistent bedtimes and familiar going-to-sleep rituals usually go to sleep easier and stay asleep longer. Familiar bedtime rituals set the baby up for sleep.
The sequence of a warm bath, rocking, nursing, lullabies, etc. set the baby up to feel that sleep is expected to follow. Capitalize on a principle of early infant development: patterns of association. Baby's developing brain is like a computer, storing thousands of sequences that become patterns. When baby clicks into the early part of the bedtime ritual, he is programmed for the whole pattern that results in drifting off to sleep.
- 2. Putting down baby awake and in different situations.**
By putting down baby, as much as you can, and as often as you can while he is awake and not completely asleep and then maybe helping him to settle with a touch or pat will give the baby the opportunity to self soothe. Mix and match the way you put him down and he will become (eventually) easier to settle anywhere.
- 3. Set predictable and consistent nap routines.** Pick out the times of the day that you are most tired, for example 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Lie down with your baby at these times every day for about a week to get your baby used to a daytime nap routine. This also sets you up to get some much-needed daytime rest rather than be tempted to "finally get something done" while baby is napping. Babies who have consistent nap routines during the day are more likely to sleep longer stretches at night sooner.
- 4. Getting the body clock settled.** It may not be possible to follow a routine with your baby for the first few months. In the early weeks and months, it is the mother and baby's joint aim to regulate the rhythms of the baby's body and days. Newborns look to their parent (usually the mother) to help them regulate their body sensations and cycles. The relationship between the parent and baby is almost totally focussed on this aim of regulation in the early weeks. Babies feel distressed and upset about uncomfortable bodily sensations such as hunger, wind, tiredness, the need to poo, the need for closeness and comfort, startle reflexes and the need to suck. Babies differ temperamentally in their ability to handle these discomforts for themselves, and in the ease that they can be 'read' by their parents (their predictability in a sense). Despite these differences all babies need significant help with regulation in the early weeks and months. As time goes by two things start to happen; one is that the babies needs become more predictable and apparent to the parent, and two is that that a sort of a pattern to the day starts to emerge.
- 5. Sounds to sleep by.** Repetitive, nearly monotonous sounds that lull baby to sleep are known as white noise, such as the sounds of a fan, air conditioner, or even tape recordings of womb sounds or vacuum cleaner sounds. Also, try running water from a nearby faucet or shower, a bubbling fish tank, a loudly ticking clock, or a metronome set at sixty beats a

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- minute. (These can all be tape-recorded.) Try music to sleep by, such as tape recordings of waterfalls or ocean sounds, or a medley of easy-listening lullabies on a continuous-play tape recorder. These sleep-inducing sounds remind baby of the sounds she was used to hearing in the womb.
6. **Know your baby A young baby needs you to take care of him.** You will not spoil a young infant by attending to their cries. Especially in the first six months, avoid those who advise you to let your baby "cry- it-out." Only you can know what "it" is and how to respond appropriately to your baby. Using the rigid, insensitive "let-him-cry-it- out" method has several problems. First, it will undermine the trust your baby has for nighttime comfort. Second, it will prevent you from working at a style of nighttime parenting until you find the one that works best for you and your family and third, it may keep you and your doctor from uncovering hidden medical causes of nightwaking.
 7. **Self soothing.** Some babies are quite good at self soothing as soon as they are born, others need more help learning and practicing different ways to calm themselves down. For many babies the ability to self soothe does not come overnight but is something that is gradually learned with parent's help. Different babies need different amounts of help with this skill.
 8. **Sleep environment.** Babies eyes will be drawn to lights and contrasts. It is best to have dimmed lights and or lamps rather than bright overhead lights. Babies may be startled by loud noises in the first few weeks. This is normal and doesn't mean you have to be totally silent for your baby to get to sleep. You don't have to tip toe around the house!
 9. **Sleeping and feeding.** Infants often fall asleep feeding. This is normal for this age. Feeding itself is a tiring process for new babies. However, as time goes on try to put the baby down awake. It is definitely not worth insisting on in ne horns, but some babies just can get themselves to sleep OK early on and it is fine to give them the opportunity to do this. Nightfeedings are normal; frequent, painful nightwaking is not. Babies at this stage have very tiny tummies and need regular feeding. They cannot take in enough to keep them going for long periods of time . -It's ok to wake your baby if he is due for a feed.
 10. **Signs of tiredness in newborns** can include jerky movements of the arms and legs, clenched fists, frowning, yawning, and obviously irritated behaviour including crying. Infants differ in how clearly, they show tired signs. Babies are temperamentally different in how easy (or difficult!) they are to 'read'.