

Australian Centre of Education in Sleep

Infant Sleep Facts

Most babies do not sleep all night. They wake up a lot during the night. They do not do this on purpose to drive parents crazy. They are in need and signaling to parents is telling them that. Research says sleeping "through the night" is usually only between 12- 5 AM and that this is more normal than 7 PM - 7 AM. Some babies sleep "through the night" at 3 months, some take longer.

Not only that but, babies only understand "day" and 'night" - that is, know the difference between night sleep and day sleep - at about 4 months .

Babies under approximately 6 months:

- cannot sleep all night without a feed. This is normal and unavoidable.
- often fall asleep feeding - the older they are the more they can be encouraged to be awake when they are put down - this helps them learn to fall asleep without a parent
- call to you during the night because they **NEED** something. Attending to their needs can alleviate the need. Therefore going to take care of their needs at this age is **NOT** spoiling them.

After approximately 9 months babies:

- are beginning to learn and associate the understanding that " I cry = Parent comes = I feel good."
- can learn and remember this behaviour pattern.

How they fall asleep after the parents have attended to them depends on how the parent settles them to back to sleep. If a parent rocks them to sleep, they will come to depend on that.

They can be left to cry a little longer before being attended to at this age (but ideally not until they get distressed) so they have the opportunity to learn how to self soothe.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Regulating baby's daytime schedule is helpful. This can make it easier to understand if the baby is hungry or tired. It can take time.

- Put a baby and toddler down in their bed or cot awake, not asleep. Start with them drowsy and then put them down more and more awake. They may need some "cot rocking" or "patting in their cot" to make this transition easier.
- Teach young children how to 'self-soothe' by allowing them the opportunity to learn how to do it and by making them as comfortable as they can be alone - comfort toys, dummies, nightlights can comfort them.
- Remember that an infant communicates with you by CRYING. What are they asking for? Is it a **NEED** or is it a **WANT**? So when they cry for you, attend to their needs (food, nappy, thirst, anxiety) not their wants (want to be cuddled, rocked or fed to sleep, want parent to be there

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while they sleep). This may need some gentle but persistent teaching after about 6-7 months old.

For more information on Infant sleep please see our book, *'The Sensible Sleep Solution: a guide to your baby's sleep in the first year'*. This book can be purchased on [Amazon](#) or in your local bookstore.

Free downloads

- [The COTTS Gentle Method for Settling Babies](#)
- [Infant sleep tips and tricks](#)