

## **Baby Sleep Habits** (from *healthychildren.org* at *American Academy of Pediatrics, AAP.org*)

“Sleeping like a baby” can mean different things to different people—usually depending on whether they’ve ever had or taken care of one before. For just about all newborns it fairly predictably means having the ability to sleep at any time and in any place, while at the same time being completely unwilling to entertain any “suggestions” as to how, when, or where to put such talent into practice. You may come across those who have ventured down the path of parenthood before you who simply shake their heads sympathetically and wish you luck in getting your newborn to wake up when you want/need him to, and even better luck getting him to go to sleep when you want. Because we’re committed to helping you set appropriate expectations for yourself and your baby, we’re going to approach the whole subject of sleep by first helping you get into the right frame of mind. We decided to start out by providing you with some basic sleep-related milestones.

- **Daily sleep.** The average newborn spends at least 16 hours a day sleeping, but there can be big differences from one newborn to the next. The total amount of sleep babies need in any given 24-hour day gradually decreases over time, but still totals just over 14 hours at 6 months of age and just under 14 hours at 1 year.
- **Naps.** Sure, many newborns nap in 1- to 2-hour spurts, but before you go planning your schedule around any preconceived idea of nap time, let us add that the length of most newborns’ naps are also very variable and tend to be scattered throughout the day (and night) in a completely random and therefore unpredictable manner. The 3-nap-a-day schedule with which you may be familiar should be considered a sleep pattern you should aspire to down the road, because most newborns don’t settle into this type of nap routine for at least a month or two. Even then, it can take a few additional weeks or months before you can count on a morning, early afternoon, and early evening nap.
- **Night versus day.** During the first few days and weeks of parenthood, you are likely to find that there’s not going to be a whole lot that distinguishes your days from your nights. More often than not, they just seem to blend together into one big sleep-deprived blur. That’s because it will be almost completely up to your newborn when he chooses to be awake and when he chooses to sleep. Most newborns spend equal amounts of time sleeping during the day and night—a tendency that can be quite challenging for those of us accustomed to more of an awake-by-day, asleep-by-night approach. By the end of their first month, most newborns do manage to figure out how to consolidate their sleep into longer stretches and start to get at least one extended stretch of sleep each 24-hour day. So with any luck, you’ll be blessed with a baby who decides to choose nighttime as the right time to do so. And for the real light at the end of the tunnel: By 3 months of age, many babies get approximately two-thirds of their total daily sleep during the night. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Sleeping-by-the-Book.aspx>

# Getting Your Baby to Sleep

Babies do not have regular sleep cycles until about 6 months of age. While newborns sleep about 16 to 17 hours per day, they may only sleep 1 or 2 hours at a time. As babies get older, they need less sleep. However, different babies have different sleep needs. It is normal for a 6-month-old to wake up during the night but go back to sleep after a few minutes.

Here are some suggestions that may help your baby (and you) sleep better at night.

1. Keep your baby calm and quiet when you feed or change her during the night. Try not to stimulate or wake her too much.
2. Make daytime playtime. Talking and playing with your baby during the day will help lengthen her awake times. This will help her sleep for longer periods during the night.
3. Put your baby to bed when drowsy but still awake. This will help your baby learn to fall asleep on her own in her own bed. Holding or rocking her until she is completely asleep may make it hard for her to go back to sleep if she wakes up during the night.
4. **Wait a few minutes before responding to your child's fussing.** See if she can fall back to sleep on her own. If she continues to cry, check on her, but don't turn on the light, play with her, or pick her up. If she gets frantic or is unable to settle herself, consider what else might be bothering her. She may be hungry, wet or soiled, feverish, or otherwise not feeling well.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/ages-stages/baby/sleep/pages/Getting-Your-Baby-to-Sleep.aspx>

## Lights On, Lights Off

If your baby seems determined to “play” during the night and sleep during the day there’s really no quick fix, but there are some easy things you can do early on to set the stage for more acceptable sleep habits in the future. During your first few weeks at home with your baby, try to establish an atmosphere that clearly differentiates night from day. A good night’s rest may not result overnight, but this approach can help get you there sooner.

- Allow for active sleep. During the day, don't worry if your baby falls asleep in more "active" areas of the house - in rooms with light or music on, for example. Similarly, don't be afraid to run an occasional daytime errand, even if this means your newborn may not quite make it all the way home before falling asleep.
- Consistent contrast. Don't spend much time worrying about background noises such as talking, telephones, or music during daylight hours. In contrast, try to make your nighttime interactions calm and quiet.

- Maintain focus. Whenever possible, take a more focused approach to your nighttime interactions—limiting them to feeding, burping, changing, and gentle soothing when necessary.
- Soft-spoken approach. Get in the habit of taking the aforementioned measures in a dark room using a soft voice whenever you want to signal to your newborn that it would be a fine time to sleep.
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Reversing-Day-Night-Reversal.aspx>