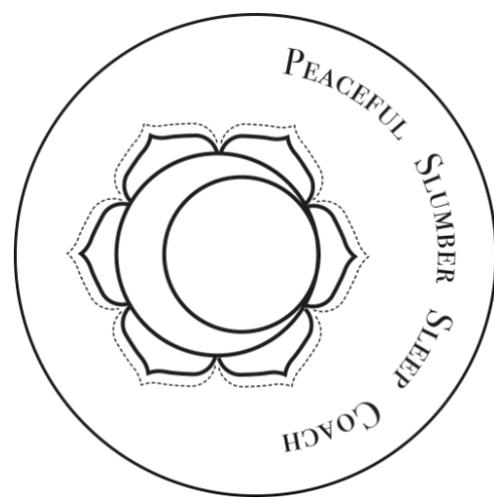


Managing early morning wake-ups



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Early Wake-Ups

Nobody likes to wake up at 5:00am on their own and a wake-up call from your *baby* is even less desirable at that time. No matter what anyone says, a

baby is not cute at 5am! If you're finding that your wake-up time is creeping earlier and earlier, or maybe it's always been early, there's usually a reason for it. Generally, the natural wake-up time of most children is anywhere between 6:00-8:00am. If your little one's wake-up call means that your baby has banked less than 11-12 hours of night sleep, ask yourself the following questions.



Common Causes of Early Morning Wakeup's

1. Is your bedtime too **late**? A late bedtime is often the leading cause for an early wake up. The majority of babies do best with a bedtime of between 6:00-8:00pm.
2. Is your bedtime too **early**? A super early bedtime is great on a day where your little one had less than stellar naps, a cold or you are trying to recover from some sleep debt that may have accumulated from weeks/months of poor sleep, but it's not meant to be used consistently over the span of several days/weeks. When we get stuck in a constant cycle of catching up (early bedtime cycle) over time will lead to baby waking up early.
3. Is your **final wake window too long**? Are you keeping baby awake too long in between last nap and bedtime? That final wake stretch between the last nap of the day and bedtime is the most sensitive of the day, and if we are stretching it too far will we can see increased night night wakings, sleep-cries, and a potential early wake-up the next day.
4. Is your **baby hungry**? Depending on the age of your little one, your child's early morning wake-up may be related to hunger. If the 5:00am wake up is 3.5-4 hours from your last night feeding, then your baby may be truly hungry. Depending on the age of your little one it's a good idea to feed him and put him back down to allow him time to fall back asleep and continue his night sleep. Many babies will keep one last early night feeding into their 9th month.

5. Are you **waiting to go get your baby** at what you consider a reasonable morning wake time? Getting baby up and resuming morning activities before a reasonable morning time lets him know that this is indeed an appropriate wake-up time. We always want to ensure we leave baby until at least 6:00am to discourage any wakings prior to this and to send a consistent message.

6. Is baby **falling asleep independently**? (With zero props- which included a pacifier, being held/rocked to sleep) Sleep is the lightest between 4-6am (our bodies have no melatonin, the sleep hormone, left at this stage of our sleep) and if baby relies on any props to go to sleep for the night initially then when they wake up in these early morning hours, they will need you to re-create these same conditions to fall back to sleep. BUT since sleep is so light at this time, it is harder for them to fall asleep even with your assistance.

7. Is baby's **bedroom dark enough**? Exposure to light upon waking can make it impossible for a child to fall back to sleep. This includes artificial light and daylight. It's just too stimulating. You really do need to "black out" your babies room. If your looking for a great window darkening solution these [window coverings](#) are our favorite cost effective and easy to install black out blind solution.

8. Is your **baby teething**? The most common 'sleep symptom' of teething is a temporary early wake-up. Again, we know that sleep is light in the early morning hours and if baby is uncomfortable/in pain/discomfort then it will be difficult for them to return to sleep at this time.

9. Is baby **overtired**? An inappropriate daytime schedule (not enough naps/day sleep, baby being kept awake too long in between naps, etc.) is a major cause of an early wake-up. The best solution for an overtired baby is an early bedtime to help them catch up on sleep (as well as a round of sleep training if the cycle of overtiredness is caused by negative sleep associations!)
10. Is baby going through a **nap transition**? Early wake-ups are inevitable as baby transitions to a new nap schedule, even with well-rested children who consistently sleep through the night.
11. Is baby reaching a **new milestone**? At the peak of mastering a new skill (crawling, standing up, walking, talking, terrible 2's, etc) baby may temporarily wake early for 2-3 weeks.
12. Is the early wake as a result of a **seasonal factor**? The natural wake-up time of most children will shift earlier with the onset of an earlier sunrise. The effects of this earlier wake-up would be apparent in May, peak in June, and return to 'later' near the end of August. Ensuring that you have room darkening shades or using other methods to darken the room will be key to helping prevent this type of early wake-up.



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YOU WAKE UP
EVERY MORNING.

REALLY FREAKING
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EVERY. SINGLE.
MORNING.

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Early Morning Wake-up Help!

Most parents cringe at the thought of their child waking up any earlier than 6:00am (and for some lucky parents even a pre-7am wake-up will cause distress!) but early wake-ups are common with babies and toddlers. Here's what to do if you find yourself with this problem.

How to shift an Early Schedule

What can we do during this time?

Tweaking the child's schedule is the first step to ensure that baby does not become overtired and to maintain a healthy amount of night sleep. The most important step is to be consistent! The schedule shift will almost always involve using an **earlier bedtime**. If we can help baby to continue to sleep through the night and work to not create any bad habits, then everything should naturally fall back into place without any crying, retraining, or severe sleep deprivation for the entire family.

What do we define as an 'early wake-up'?

'Early' is a bit subjective - early to one family might mean 7:00am and early to another family might mean 5:00am. For the purpose of this ebook, I define 'early' as a) anything earlier than **6:00am** and b) a wake-up time that resulted in less than **~10-12 hours** of nighttime sleep.

What do we do first?

The first step when working to eliminate an early wake-up is to ensure that there isn't anything external that could be waking baby at an earlier hour. Is it too bright in baby's room in the evening or early morning? If you think of a scale from 1-10, one being bright and sunny and ten being pitch black, we want that room between an 8-10 for all sleep times. An 8-10, to me, would mean that any time you are in that room [for any sleep periods] and you were to have your hand outstretched in front of your face, it should be hard to make out your hand. Melatonin [the sleepy hormone] is only released when it's dark [thus why it's called the 'vampire hormone!'] If that room is too bright when baby is trying to settle at night or trying to re-settle in the early morning, we aren't getting help from melatonin and this can lead to early wake-ups. Cheap ways to get that room nice and dark include black garbage bags on the windows, tin foil, a dark blanket, cardboard, etc. For

something more long-term, check out [these window covers](#) - they work fantastic and are super affordable as well.

Once you've ensured that you've eliminated the "light factor" that is possibly contributing to your early wake-ups, your next step is a **schedule shift**.



What is a 'schedule shift'?

The term is pretty self-explanatory - we are attempting to shift the schedule. We never want to just push baby's bedtime later in hopes of shifting the schedule, as too-long of a stretch before bed will almost always lead to an early wake-up. We need to shift the entire schedule - naps and bedtime. Because we are stretching baby, the schedule shift can cause some overtiredness but we just have to persist - give the schedule shift **a full week** before deciding if it is working or not. The

schedule shift looks differently for different nap schedules so I've broken it down by number of naps:

If your baby is on a 3 nap schedule:

- Continue to leave your baby in their crib until **6:00am** [if you've read the above articles, you'll know leaving them until 6:00am is important as by scooping your baby up earlier than 6:00am and exposing them to light/stimulation of any kind, we are re-setting that internal clock for 'early!'] Now, I don't mean you have to just leave them in their cribs alone, you could be comforting/reassuring during this time or even just sitting in the dark room with them!
- Do not put down for baby's first nap until **8:15am**. As baby progresses through the schedule shift, you'll want to push this 'no nap before' rule to **8:45am**. Using an extra long wind down routine before sleep times to help calm baby if they are getting a bit overtired is a good strategy to help us make these desired nap times possible.
- Do not put down for baby's second nap until **11:15am**. As baby progresses, your goal is no put down before **11:45am** [as a note, if your baby is currently not an independent sleeper, your goal would just be for baby to be soothed to sleep by about 15 minutes after these ideal put down times.
- Do not put down for baby's third nap until **2:30pm**. As baby progresses, the goal would be no put down before **3:45pm** [the variation here is bigger because this awake time is the least sensitive of the day, so we are able to stretch it a bit more without disastrous results].
- Do not put down for baby's bedtime until **6:15pm**. Our ultimate goal for put down will be no earlier than **6:45pm**. Because bedtime is the most sensitive time of the day, an extra long bedtime routine is a really good idea! If you have a particularly tough day, a put down of 6:00pm would be appropriate, but keep working on it!

If your baby is on a 2 nap schedule:

- Continue to leave your baby in their crib until **6:00am** [if you've read the above articles, you'll know leaving them until 6:00am is important as by scooping your baby up earlier than 6:00am and exposing them to light/stimulation of any kind, we are re-setting that internal clock for 'early!'] Now, I don't mean you have to just leave them in their cribs alone, you could be comforting/reassuring during this time or even just sitting in the dark room with them!
- Do not put down for baby's first nap until **9:00am**. As baby progresses through the schedule shift, you'll want to push this 'no nap before' rule to **9:15am**. Using an extra-long wind down routine before sleep times to help calm baby if they are getting a bit overtired is a good strategy to help us make these desired nap times possible.
- Do not put down for baby's second nap until **1:00pm**. As baby progresses, your goal is no put down before **2:00pm**. The variation here is bigger because this awake time is the least sensitive of the day, so we are able to stretch it a bit more without disastrous results [as a note, if your baby is currently not an independent sleeper, your goal would just be for baby to be soothed to sleep by about 15 minutes after these ideal put down times. So, perhaps you'd start rocking them at 2:00pm with a goal of them being asleep by 2:15pm].
- Do not put down for baby's bedtime until **6:15pm**. Our ultimate goal for put down will be no earlier than **6:45pm**. Because bedtime is the most sensitive time of the day, an extra long bedtime routine is a really good idea! If you have a day with two short naps, a bedtime put down of 5:45-6:00pm would be appropriate, but keep working on it!

If your child is on a 1 nap schedule:

- Continue to leave your child in their crib/bed until **6:00am** [if you've read the above articles, you'll know leaving them until 6:00am is important as by scooping your child up earlier than 6:00am and exposing them to light/stimulation of any kind, we are re-setting that internal clock for 'early!'] Now, I don't mean you have to just leave them in their cribs/beds alone, you could be comforting/reassuring during this time or even just sitting in the dark room with them!
- **For a child younger than 2 years of age:** you want to slowly shift their nap later and later into the day until you are not putting them down for their nap any earlier than **12:15pm**. What time did you put them down for their nap yesterday? Take that time and add 15 minutes. Every few days, add another 15 minutes until you are not laying them down until 12:15pm at the earliest [our ultimate goal is a nap occurring between 12:30-1:00pm].
- **For a child 2 years of age or older:** you want to slowly shift their nap later and later into the day until you are not putting them down for their nap any earlier than **12:45pm**. What time did you put them down for their nap yesterday? Take that time and add 15 minutes. Every few days, add another 15 minutes until you are not laying them down until 12:45pm at the earliest [our ultimate goal is a nap occurring between 1:00-1:30pm].
- Continue to always be flexible with the timing of bed based on when your child woke up from their nap. For a child under the age of 2, we are aiming for bedtime to occur about **4.5-5 hours** after the nap ends. For a child that is age 2 or older, bedtime should occur about **5 hours** after the nap ends.

Introduction of an alarm clock

For children over the age of 2 there are a few different products on the market that you can use to help encourage your kids to stay in bed and maybe fall back to sleep. We have used an old digital alarm clock and used electrical tape to black out the minutes. This gave us the ability to instruct that until the number showed a “7” it was still sleepy time. Here are some of the other cool toddler style alarm clocks on the market:

- [The Gro Clock](#)
- [Onaroo Ok to wake alarm clock and night light](#)
- [Onaroo teach me time talking alarm clock and night light](#)

In summary...

Early wake-ups are tricky and exhausting. The longer its been going on for and the stronger your child's internal clock is, the more challenging it will be to changes your childs early wake-ups. It takes time, patience and consistency to re-set that internal clock but it is possible! If you just aren't sure how to get started on need some extra support feel free to send me an email and we can set up a sleep plan that meets your sleep challenge and your needs.