Infant Sleep

What Parents Want To Know
People who say they sleep like a baby usually don’t have one … (Leo J. Burke)

Get to know your baby’s tired cues.
Tired cues can look like:

- Yawning
- Jerky movements
- Becoming quiet, not wanting to play
- Fussing
- Rubbing their eyes
- Crying
- Facial grimaces (i.e. pulling faces)
- Tight fists

Some babies fall asleep easily with just a little help, while others can be harder to settle. Feeding, rocking, singing, shushing, and patting may be soothing to your baby. An over-tired baby can be harder to settle. Signs that the baby is over-tired include being very over-active, stare-y eyes, and being very quick to cry.

“Sleep Training” is a common term for a method of letting baby fall asleep on their own. Some training methods involve leaving baby to cry without being comforted. Some unintended effects on mother and baby could include:

- Increased crying
- Early weaning from breastfeeding
- Increased anxiety for mom
- Increased risk of SIDS

Almost all adults find broken sleep makes them feel tired and cranky, and relationships can suffer. Here are some ideas to help sleep happen more easily:

- Get outside
- Ask for help from a friend or family member with some of your day-to-day stressors
- Exercise and eat well
- Start your own relaxing bedtime routine which could include having a hot shower or bath
- Breastfeed and cuddle your baby before bed
- Try meditation or deep breathing to relax

Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bed. These can decrease the quality of your sleep. Bright lights and screen use can also make falling asleep harder.

If you have questions or would like more information about your baby’s sleep, talk to a Public Health Nurse by calling the Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 or visit our website at www.healthunit.org.
Over time, babies may “learn” that the bedtime routine and their crib mean it is time for sleep. They may learn to fall asleep on their own at this stage. Things such as reading a story, bath time, baby massage, singing or rocking can be part of your baby’s routine.

Babies will sleep through the night when they are developmentally ready to do so. Many children will wake up often even as toddlers.

### What to Expect...

#### 1-3 Months:
- Irregular sleep patterns
- Many naps during the day and night
- Usually wake every 2-3 hours to feed
- Babies may move, grunt, and twitch during sleep

#### 3-6 Months:
- May start a more regular sleep pattern including naps
- May start sleeping for longer stretches
- Frequent waking to feed is still common

#### 6-12 Months:
- May change to a fairly regular sleep routine
- Many short naps may change to fewer, longer naps
- Waking at night to feed is STILL common

### How Can I Keep My Baby Safe While They Sleep?

All parents want to keep their babies safe while they sleep. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (or SIDS) can be a scary term for parents. There are ways to reduce the risks of SIDS:

- Put baby’s bed in the same room as their parents for the first 6 months of life (called room sharing)
- Breastfeed your baby
- Smoke-free environment day and night
- Use a crib, cradle or bassinette that meets Health Canada’s safety standards
- Place baby on their back to sleep for every sleep
- Sleep surface is firm and flat
- Only baby in the crib – no blankets, pillows, stuffed toys or bumper pads etc.
- Room should not be too warm
- Dress baby in light clothes such as a one piece sleeper

### What About Bed-sharing?

While a crib is the safest place for babies to sleep, some families may choose to have their baby sleep with them (called bed-sharing). There are risks to bed-sharing and it is not safe in certain situations.

* Following the “Safe Sleep Seven” can make bed-sharing safer.
  You need to be:
  1. A non-smoker
  2. Sober and unimpaired
  3. Breastfeeding

  Your baby needs to be:
  4. Healthy and full-term
  5. On his/her back for every sleep
  6. Lightly dressed, not swaddled

  You both need to be:
  7. On a safe surface (firm, flat mattress and no spaces for baby to get stuck)

*From La Leche League’s “Sweet Sleep: Nighttime and naptime strategies for the breastfeeding family”, 2014.

### Pets and Other Children Should Not Be in the Bed

**DID YOU KNOW:**

Adult beds, waterbeds, air mattresses, couches/ sofas, pillows/cushions, playpens/ play-yards, baby seats, car seats, swings, bouncers, strollers are not safe sleep surfaces for babies.

### Should I Have a Sleep Routine for My Baby?

Over time, babies may “learn” that the bedtime routine and their crib mean it is time for sleep. They may learn to fall asleep on their own at this stage. Things such as reading a story, bath time, baby massage, singing or rocking can be part of your baby’s routine.

**Tip:**

Once a bedtime routine is in place, it is important to try and keep it consistent. This signals to baby it is time to sleep.

### Common Myth

Some people think baby will sleep longer at night if they give cereal or formula. This has not been shown to be true. Giving food before baby shows signs of readiness (around 6 months of age), or giving formula can lead to:

- Higher risk of SIDS
- Baby more prone to getting sick
- Higher risk of long term health problems
- Early weaning from breastfeeding
- Higher risk of allergies

**DID YOU KNOW:**

All babies have different personalities and temperaments. This can affect how much sleep baby needs, and how well they adjust to changes.