

The big sleep

Sleep deprivation is one of the biggest shocks for new parents. Lack of sleep can leave you short of temper, unable to concentrate, tearful, stressed and even depressed.

A survey by *Mother and Baby* magazine found out that eight out of 10 mothers blame lack of sleep for putting relationships under strain and causing rows.

The good news for bleary-eyed mums and dads is that babies under 12 weeks will sleep, on average, twice as much as their parents. The bad news is that half of this sleep happens during the day.

Young babies don't sleep for long stretches of time because they need frequent feeds. On average, they sleep two hours at a time during the day and four-six hours at night. However, it's not uncommon for some young babies to wake up more often at night.

THE FIRST MONTHS

This is the hardest time as your baby will tend to sleep more during the day (16-18 hours' sleep overall). It really helps

if you can sleep or rest when your baby does - don't be tempted to do household chores.

You might want to keep a record of when your baby feeds, sleeps and has his nappy changed. It's too early for routines, but you might spot patterns that will help you plan your day (although these patterns might change week by week). If you breastfeed, knowing how many wet nappies he will produce can help you find out if your baby gets enough milk. Health Visitors enquire about wet nappies and you will know what to say!

THREE MONTHS TO 1 YEAR

Your baby will gradually sleep more during the night. Daytime naps will become less frequent by six months, with many babies enjoying up to 12 hours at night.

If your baby is teething, ill or going through a growth spurt, she will wake up more often at night.

By one year, many babies will sleep 12 to 14 hours, including daytime naps. If your baby sleeps less during the night and more during the day, try

- disassociating feeding from sleep. If you're breastfeeding, give her the last feed early in the evening; if you're bottle-feeding, gradually decrease the amount of formula at her last feed and distribute it among daytime feeds.



Sound Sleep - calming and helping your baby or child to sleep by Sarah Woodhouse, £8 from www.nctshop.co.uk.

A well-researched guide for parents of babies, toddlers and older children. Useful insights, inspiring stories, handy checklists and easy-to-use-methods.

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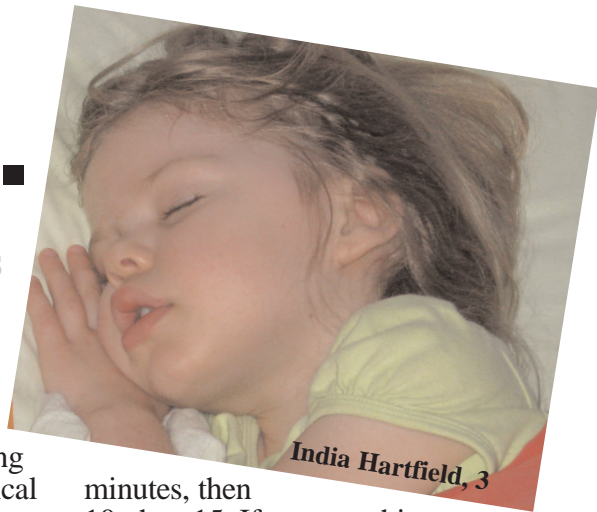
GOOD SLEEPING HABITS

From three months on, start to teach your baby to go to sleep on his own. This is easier if you use sleep-associated behaviours, such as bathing, putting on pyjamas and listening to a story, switching on a musical mobile with dimmed lights or even giving him a soft toy to hug.

If you breastfeed and your child falls asleep on your breast, this will not last forever - at some point you will have to teach him to go to sleep on his own - the earlier the better!

Some parents swear by 'controlled crying', but it's not recommended with younger babies - some experts

advise parents not to use this method before six months, others before one year old. This is how it works: if your baby starts crying when you put him in his cot, leave the room and come back after five minutes. Reassure him by saying, 'Mummy is here, now go to sleep' and leave the room. If he starts crying after 10 minutes, go back and repeat the procedure. Repeat every 15 minutes till he is asleep. You will need to do this every time he wakes in the night. Start your checking from 5



India Hartfield, 3

'By one year, many babies will sleep 12-14 hours, including daytime naps'

minutes, then 10, then 15. If you use this technique, he should not cry for more than an hour. You have to be consistent and the first three nights will be hard. If you are not made of stern stuff, don't attempt it. This system is not foolproof and it won't work for some babies.

Some parents recommend reading *The No-Cry Sleep Solution* by Elizabeth Pantley.

This gentler method shows how to develop a bedtime routine creating positive sleep associations and offers a gradual withdrawal method to get your baby off the breast or bottle.

DAYTIME NAPS

Managing your baby's naps is crucial. If he has a nap late in the day, it will affect the night's sleep. Keep his nap in the morning or early in the afternoon if you can.

When your baby naps, don't worry about tiptoeing quietly

Mackenzie Hartfield, 20 months



around the house, she will be comforted by familiar sounds.

If she refuses to nap during the day, take her out in the pushchair or even carry her in a sling.

TODDLERS AND SLEEP

Many parents agree that there is a sure way to get a toddler to sleep, just get him knackered with fun activities, such as a trip to the swings, to an nct social or to the children's centre.

It's not unheard of toddlers who don't sleep through. If yours is

doing well with solids in the day, try gradually reducing the volume of milk you give him at night; offer only water when he wakes. If you are still breastfeeding and he insists for a comfort feed, get your partner to settle him.

According to research, toddlers surface from sleep around five times at night. They might mumble, turn over or bang their limbs against the side of the cot. Even if they open their eyes, they usually go back to sleep.

If your toddler has not learnt to go to sleep, you'll need a week to establish a routine. Whatever sleeping association you use, he needs reassurance.

Toddlers tend to nap less during the day - usually a major nap around lunchtime from one to two hours. Don't let him nap too late in the afternoon and wake him up if he naps for too long or it might affect his night sleep. If your toddler is an early riser, light might be an issue so a blackout blind might help.

Sleep: preventing factors

Overtiredness/overstimulation Overtired babies/toddlers are irritable and will fight sleep.

Keep a diary to find out if he gets enough sleep/naps for his age. Babies/toddlers need to wind down to go to sleep. Bathing/reading a story with dimmed lights might help.

Hunger/thirst/diet Hunger/thirst is one of the reasons toddlers wake up at night. While young babies must not be denied food, children doing well with solids should sleep through. If you're breastfeeding and drink lots of drinks high in caffeine, your baby will be alert. With toddlers, too much processed food or drinks high in sugar and additives can lead to poor sleep.

Illness/teething If he has a cold or he's ill, your baby will wake up to feed at night. If he suffers from severe teething pain, speak to your GP. A dose of liquid paracetamol will help.

Discomfort/wind/nappy rash If your baby's room is too hot or too cold, he might wake up (the ideal room temperature is 18C; if he's too hot, check his bedding). Make sure young babies are winded after their feed. Separation anxiety could inhibit sleep from around nine months old. Reassure your baby/toddler but do not give him too much attention or he will wake up regularly, expecting to be rewarded with cuddles or comfort feeds. Nappy rash might affect his sleep. Young babies' skin is very sensitive, so use warm water and cotton wool instead of wipes to clean their bottom. Use a barrier cream. If rash persists, see your GP.

Mum's the word: pillow talk

We had a nightmare with our son from 7 months. He used to sleep like a dream from 4 months on, waking up once in the night for a feed. Then he started crawling and his nights were suddenly horrendous, just when I thought he'd be physically whacked out! My Health Visitor suggested trying to get him to drop the feed in the middle of the night, but he then went from waking up once or twice, to waking up 4 or 5 times and needing a feed and being awake for an hour at the last wake up. By 9 months I was at the end of my tether and went to see the GP convinced I had late onset PND! She suggested reinstating the feed as he was probably hungry, and try dropping it later when he was more settled.

*I reinstated the feed, and actually increased it (up to a 9oz bottle) and gave it to him as soon as he woke up. I also gave him some high carb, low-sugar snacks just before bath time (rice cakes, toast) to help him get through. During the day I gave him more solids. By now, he was used to me comforting him with cuddles when he woke up at night, so was unsettled. One night I was so tired I decided to give controlled crying a go, desperate to go back to bed. I put him in his cot, he cried for 4 minutes and then stopped. Ten minutes later he cried for another 2 minutes. Half an hour later we were both asleep. So I think hunger is the problem, not a breast-comforting issue, although that may be a secondary problem. Try to tackle the hunger and the comforting will be easier to take care of. **Mary, York***

As a supporter of co-sleeping for breastfeeding mums, I recommend reading these helpful books:

Three in a bed, the benefits of sleeping with your baby by Deborah Jackson; *The no cry sleep solution* by Elizabeth Pantley; *The continuum concept* by Jean Liedloff.

Rosie, Rugby

Have you considered co-sleeping? It is how the vast majority of babies sleep. If you follow the safety guidelines, it is as safe for your baby as sleeping on his own, and makes nights and breastfeeding easier. We've never had problems with getting enough sleep because we co-sleep and breastfeed. When my girls have needed to feed at night, they latch on and feed - and we never really wake up. They grow out of the need to breastfeed at night time when they are ready. There really is no hurry. To find out more about co-sleeping, read Deborah Jackson's *Three in a bed*, or world-renowned infant sleep researcher James McKenna's *Sleeping with Your Baby*. **Cathy, Southampton**

When we had our son, we were mindful of friends' experiences. Friends of mine had their daughter in a cot in their room and never attempted to move it to the nursery. As she outgrew it, she wouldn't sleep in her own room because it was alien to her, so they allowed her to sleep in bed with them. As she grew she intermittently would sleep in her own bed but wasn't happy. She's 9 and the 'big' bed is no longer big enough for 3. She hates to sleep on her own; quite often dad sleeps in her bed and she and mum have the 'big' bed. If she sleeps in her room, she is only comfortable if mum and dad go to bed at the same time, 8pm on school nights. To compound matters they also have 2 twin sons, who never got to sleep with mum and dad and who feel that special treatment is unfair. The boys, now 5, go to bed quite happily every night without any fuss. They've been in their room from birth.

Our decision to put Alex in his room was not in consideration of our needs, but a balanced decision based on what we thought was best for him now and any siblings he might have in the future. He sleeps well in his room for day naps and through the night, is happy and secure. He rarely wakes up crying and wakes in the morning happily gurgling away.

I think it's a question of balance and it seems everyone's sleep story is as unique as their child. The NCT encourages community-based parental support, that support can only be nurtured by consideration for others and understanding of individual circumstances.

Heather, London