

## Infants and Sleeping:

### Baby Sleep

"Sleep like a baby." The person who thought of this saying obviously never had children!

Babies are active sleepers. Their eyes move; they squint; they moan; they gurgle; they smile; they mumble and grumble. This is normal and expected. You'll understand why by reading on!

Instead of using non-REM and REM for children, doctors and scientists categorize the two as *quiet* and *active* sleep. Scientists believe that active sleep patterns develop in children even before they are born in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy and quiet sleep patterns develop in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> months of pregnancy. (This is interesting to note for premature children and their sleep problems). They also note that in the uterus, during an active cycle, babies practice breathing, whereas in quiet sleep, they do not. The older the infant gets the less active sleep she needs. It appears, then, that active sleep is vital, so perhaps that's why so much importance is placed on active sleep in the uterus and, as you'll see, the first few months of life.

Infants' sleep patterns and cycles differ greatly from those of adults. Infants spent about 50% of their time in active sleep while premature infants spend 80% of their time in active sleep (as opposed to 20-25% in adults). The other 50% are spent in quiet sleep, but it's not as deep as an adult's. Infants don't reach stages III and IV of quiet sleep like adults do. Also, when infants are in their quiet sleep, their brain waves aren't a steady flow of waves but short bursts.

Baby's sleep cycles usually last 50 minutes (unlike the 90 minutes of an adult). In their first few months of life, infants will often slip directly into active sleep – something that adults never do. Another difference between infants' sleep patterns and adults is that infants have sleep patterns that last throughout the 24-hour period. These are called polyphasic sleep periods. Can you imagine a functioning adult drifting off to sleep every 50 to 100 minutes? Adults have one sleep period that lasts about 8 hours.

By the time an infant is three months old, she will have developed all four stages of quiet sleep, and by the time she is six months old, she will spend most of her time (70%) in quiet sleep, coming closer to an adult's bio-rhythms. It won't be until your child is a toddler, though, that she will almost match an adult's sleep habits. Interestingly, people of advanced age go back down to three sleeping stages, not experiencing Stage IV or sleep.

Have you noticed that your child, after just an hour of sleep, often stirs and is restless? This is because she has probably just completed one cycle and is coming out of quiet sleep. Adults do it every night. We wake up, pull up the covers, turn around, and adjust the pillow .. whatever. But if somebody came to our side and said, "Hey, do you need something?" we might totally wake up and have trouble getting back to sleep.

Because we're so in tuned to our children (especially new parents), we sometimes rush to their bed, wondering why they're waking. Most children will grumble, move around and get back to sleep – if left to return to sleep. At this stage in sleep, sleep terrors and sleep walking may happen as well (covered in Chapters 8 and 9). In that case, your child might need your aid. Again, though, a child arousing

after about an hour is natural. By understanding this, you can understand that your child can be left to fall back to sleep. Especially when you know for the first few years of life, this will be happening a lot!

## **Early Bedtime Means Better Baby Sleep**

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In their efforts to encourage their baby to sleep better, one approach that many parents use is to put their baby to bed in the evening. They think, 'If he's 'really tired' he'll sleep better, right?' Wrong! This often backfires because Baby becomes overtired, and chronically sleep-deprived.

In the majority of cases, a baby's biological clock is preset for an early bedtime. When parents work with that time, a baby falls asleep more easily and stays asleep more peacefully. Most babies are primed to go to sleep for the night as early as 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. I often hear about how babies and toddlers have a 'melt down' period at the end of the day, when they get fussy, whiny and out of sorts. I suspect that it's simply a sign of over-tired children longing for sleep.

## **Early to bed, early to rise?**

For babies, early to bed does mean early to rise! Most babies sleep with an earlier bedtime. Many parents are afraid to put their baby to bed so early, thinking that they will then face a 5 a.m. wake up call. But keeping your little one up too late backfires, and more often, a late night is the one followed by that early morning awakening.

My youngest child, two-year-old Coleton used to go to bed at 9:30, the time when my three older children went to bed, because it was convenient for me. At that time in the evening, it would take him a long time to get settled. I never connected his inability to settle with his late bedtime. When I started putting him to bed at 7:00, he fell asleep much more quickly and slept more soundly.

### **What About Working Parents?**

If you are a working parent, and your evening with your little one at 6:30 or 7:00, you may find yourself torn between keeping your baby up for some playtime and getting him right to bed. You may find, though, that when your baby goes to sleep earlier, and sleeps better, he awakens in a pleasant mood, eager to play. Because you have gotten a good night's sleep, you can consider getting up earlier in the morning and saving some time before work to play with your baby, as an alternative to that late-evening play session. You'll both enjoy that special morning time. Later, when your baby is consistently sleeping all night, every night, you can move bedtime a little later and judge whether the difference affects your baby's sleep.

### **3 big sleeping myths (lies!) parents fall prey to!**

*Myth 1: If your baby is a poor sleeper, she will always be a poor sleeper.*

*One of the first questions you'll get as a parent is, "Is she sleeping through the night?" At this time, it's perfectly natural to want to take your friend's name off your Christmas list and never speak to her again. Could she be so blind as to not see the dark circles under your eyes and rat's nest in your hair?*

*Parents take children sleeping through the night personally. They feel it can be attributed to their success or failure in the years to come. It's almost like the SATs for infants!*

*As we covered in Chapter 1, no infant will have a regular sleeping schedule, making sleeping through the night a virtual impossibility. If your child has trouble getting into a sleeping routine in the first several months, it doesn't mean she is destined to be a poor sleeper. It simply means she needs a little more practice getting into the routine of things, and you will need a little more patience.*

*Myth 2: If your baby is a good sleeper, she will always be a good sleeper.*

*Aha! Vengeance! This is for those tired out parents who have had to listen to their friends proudly proclaim at a dinner party that their little boy slept all through the night at one-week-old and continues to do so today! They look refreshed, energetic, and vibrant. Meanwhile, you and your partner have been taking turns, running down the hallway, trying to soothe the angst of your colicky two-month old.*  
< style="font-family: verdana;"> *Your friends will probably have their fair share of restless nights because their little boy will hit a biorhythmic bump in the road of sleep and keep them up every night for three weeks straight. Not all children who are good sleepers initially continue to be good sleepers, though some do. The key is consistency and routine implemented early in any child's sleep regimen.*

*Myth 3: Bottle fed babies sleep better than breast fed babies.*

*This used to be a common belief, and parents continue to give their children a bottle before going to bed. I've read conflicting data on this. Some still believe bottle-fed babies stay fuller. Several newer reports that I read say that breast-fed babies' biorhythms adapt to their mother's milk so they sleep through the night. I haven't found any definitive studies, so I'll leave that one up to you.*

**Is it a good idea to use a nightlight in my baby's room?**

*Question: Is it a good idea to use a nightlight in my baby's room? Someone told me they can harm children's eyesight.*

*Answer: You might want to pass on the nightlight for now — but not because it will do any damage to your baby's eyes.*

*Many parents became alarmed about nightlights and vision problems after a highly publicized study found a link between nightlight use for children under age 2 and the development of myopia (nearsightedness). But not only have the authors of that study since backed away from their findings, a follow-up study by a different research team found absolutely no relationship between nightlights and nearsightedness. So there's no need to be concerned about nightlights affecting your child's eyesight.*

*But while nightlights are a source of convenience for parents who don't want to stumble around in the dark and of comfort for toddlers and older children who are afraid of the dark or scared of monsters, they aren't necessary for infants and young toddlers. That's because children don't experience nighttime anxiety until age 2 or 3, when cognitive development enables*

*them to understand the concept of "fear" and they're capable of imagining scary things lurking in the dark. In the meantime, your baby will sleep better in a dark room.*

### **Jaundice in the New-born baby**

*Babytips - Tips on baby care: "Jaundice in the New-born Baby*

*Do not be alarmed if the whites of your baby's eyes and their skin turns a slight yellow colour after 3 days. This is a condition called jaundice and is caused because your baby's liver cannot work fast enough to dispose of a pigment called bilirubin. Premature babies are more likely to suffer from jaundice.*

*It usually clears up after a few days and this can be aided by exposure to sunlight (through a window). You may also be encouraged to feed your baby as often as possible. Sometimes when the bilirubin levels are very high a baby may need to be exposed to controlled amounts of ultra violet light in the form of phototherapy. Ultra violet breaks down the pigment levels in the skin. This will be carried out in hospital. Your baby will be placed in a special crib sometimes in Special Care. This is a routine treatment and is very effective. "*

### **Myth Busters #3: Babies sleep through the night at 2 or 3 months - Partnership for Learning**

*Myth Busters #3: Babies sleep through the night at 2 or 3 months - Partnership for Learning: "Almost all of us fall victim to 'Parenting Myths' of one kind or another. If life with a baby isn't quite what you expected, this article is for you.*

*Parenting Myth #3: Babies sleep through the night at 2 or 3 months*

*Fact: When they reach 11 pounds and overcome colic, babies may sleep as long as 7 hours a night. After four months, they may sleep as long as 10 or 12 hours.*

*That may is an important word, though. For a baby to sleep through the night, he must be ready to cycle between deep and light sleep several times. (This is true for all humans, but babies cycles are shorter.) That means that every 3 or 4 hours your baby will enter a more active state which is closer to waking. When he comes up into this light stage, he may startle or cry out. Sleeping on his back makes this startle response more likely.*

*Babies need a pattern of 'self-comforting' behaviors to settle back down to sleep. These may include:*

*Sucking (on a thumb or pacifier)*

*'Nesting' into a comfortable position (some babies like to worm their way into a corner, where the pressure of the bed may remind them of the womb.)*

*Finding a favorite blanket*

*Some babies are better at this than others. If they are no good at it (like three of my children), then they get more and more upset and eventually wake up completely. That´s when the trouble starts. That´s when they need you.*

*You will hear differing advice about what you can do to help babies sleep through the night. Some doctors insist it´s important to train babies to settle themselves. Others say, 'Who cares? Just be there for*

*them when they wake.'*

*I've learned two things while dealing with three non-settlers, who all cherished the notion that nursing wake."*

*I've learned two things while dealing with three non-settlers, who all cherished the notion that nursing was the perfect bedtime snack:*

*Don't sweat it, and refuse to get angry. If you've got to be tired, choose to be tired and content; it's much less stressful for everyone.*

*When they're ready, they'll sleep. Hey, when they get to be teens, you can barely wake them for anything!*

**"Sleeping through the night"**

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You have probably heard that babies should start 'sleeping through the night' at about two to four months of age. What you must understand is that, for a new baby, a five-hour stretch is a full night. Many (but nowhere near all) babies at this age can sleep uninterrupted from midnight to 5 a.m. (Not that they always do.) A far cry from what you may have thought 'sleeping through the night' meant!

What's more, while the scientific definition of sleeping through the night is five hours, most of us wouldn't consider that anywhere near a full night's sleep for ourselves. Also, some of these sleep-through-the-nighters will suddenly begin waking more frequently, and it's often a full year or even two until your little one will settle into a mature, all-night, every night sleep pattern. "

