

Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits in Babies 6 Months & Up

Some starting points to help children learn to sleep independently, restfully, and through the entire night.



Yes, your babies CAN sleep from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., I promise!

*Here are some ways **you** can facilitate this happening:*

One: Choose an age appropriate and very consistent bedtime.

The best time to put your baby to bed is sometime between 7 and 8 pm. This ensures that your child will be able to get a solid 11-12 hours of sleep during the night. (And yes... that is how much sleep children should be getting every night, up until the age of about 10.)

This time can fluctuate slightly based on nap time and length, but should be within the same 15 to 30 minute window every **single** night.

Two: Put your child to sleep in the same place every day and night.

Whether your child has a room of their own or shares a room/bed shares with parents, it's important that you put your son or daughter to sleep in the same place every night (and for naps during the day as much as possible). Putting your child to bed in a familiar place lets them know they are safe and that they are in a place where sleep is expected of them.

Bed-sharing is fine, as long as both parents and children are happy with that arrangement. Once the child OR the parent finds this to be creating sleep issues (not enough, not restful, broken sleep, etc.) then it is time to help your child learn to sleep independently.

Three: Create a predictable bedtime routine.

Consistency and predictability are **really** important to babies and toddlers. When they know what to expect at bedtime, it makes it **much** easier for them to make the transition from waking to sleeping - and that's why creating a bedtime routine is so important!

A good example of a bedtime routine might be something like this:

7:00 p.m. Bath time

7:15 p.m. Put on pyjamas

7:20 p.m. Story or songs

7:25 p.m. Brush teeth

7:30 p.m. Into crib

Your bedtime routine shouldn't take more than 15 to 30 minutes, and it's VERY important that the routine is the same every single night aside from the rare occasion. The repetition and predictability are what let your child know that he or she will soon be expected to fall asleep. The routine can be much shorter as well and include fewer steps – AS LONG AS it indicates to your little one that bedtime comes next.

Four: Put your baby to bed awake!

If you've been rocking, nursing, or otherwise soothing your child to sleep, this is going to seem like a tough one... but it's actually the most important step! It's only by letting your baby or toddler fall asleep WITHOUT your help at bedtime that he or she can learn the skills necessary to stay asleep through the night.

Five: If your child wakes up during the night, wait a few minutes before intervening.

Everyone - babies and adults alike - will actually wake up several times every night. For most adults, these wakings are so brief that we don't even remember them the next morning, because we slip directly into the next sleep cycle. However, many babies will immediately start to fuss or cry when they wake up, because the environment is slightly (or a lot!) different from when they fell asleep and they likely haven't quite learned to fall asleep on their own.

If a baby has been nursed or rocked to sleep at bedtime since birth, it's not surprising that they wouldn't know how to fall asleep independently. The good news is that many babies can figure out how to get back to sleep within just a few minutes of waking up in the night! If your child continues to fuss or cry for more than a few minutes, you'll want to go in and offer some comfort, but it's important to let your child do the work of falling back to sleep. You can speak softly to your child and do some gentle rubbing or patting, but you should avoid picking your child up and rocking or nursing back to sleep.

There you have it... the 5 most important things you need to know about getting your child to sleep on time, without great fuss, and through the night. Of course, it's important to keep in mind that every child is a little different - there's no "magic formula" that will work 100% of the time for every baby!

My passion (and my profession) is helping parents like you develop customized plans for resolving pediatric sleep concerns, so if you have any questions about what you've just read OR about your child specifically, please feel free to get in touch at info@eatplaysleep.ca or 403.986.8444. Additionally, you can find the blog at eatplaysleep.ca and our Facebook community page at <https://www.facebook.com/eatplaysleepcd>