

Helping Baby Sleep Safe and Sound

The birth of a baby brings many changes. Sleeping habits are one of the biggest. Parents want their baby to be safe and sound, even when they are asleep.

A baby's sleep schedule is not the same as an adult's. Newborns sleep about 16 – 20 hours a day, in 2 – 4 hour blocks of time. They do not know the difference between day and night. No newborn baby sleeps through the night. Because they have such tiny stomachs, they need to eat every 2 – 4 hours, day and night.

As babies grow, they are able to sleep for longer periods of time without eating. By 6 months, they often sleep 8 – 10 hours at night. After 2 months of age, parents can help their baby develop good sleeping habits.

Because babies spend so much time sleeping, it is important that they sleep safely. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) occurs in infants younger than one year of age. The exact causes are unknown. However, research shows that parents can reduce the risk for SIDS by following some simple safety rules.

Use these sleeping tips to keep baby safe.

Sleeping Safely

- Put baby to sleep on his back – for naps and at night.
- Never let baby sleep on a sofa, chair, or bed with others.
- A safety-certified crib or bassinet is a safe place for baby to sleep.
- After 1 month, baby may use a clean, dry pacifier when going to sleep.
- Take all toys, soft objects, pillows, sheepskins, quilts and puffy crib bumpers out of baby's crib.
- Lie baby on a firm mattress – free of soft bedding. Make sure the mattress exactly fits the crib with no gaps between the mattress and frame.
- Use fitted sheets only.
- If you use a blanket, make sure it comes up only to the baby's chest. Tuck it in at the bottom of the mattress to secure it.
- Dress baby so he does not get too warm while sleeping.
- Make sure your baby's head remains uncovered while sleeping.
- Forbid smoking around your baby.



Sleeping Soundly

After 2 months of age:

- Have a bedtime routine. Do this routine every night.
- Play with baby during the day. Go outside, sing, and play with toys.
- Avoid feeding your baby right before bedtime. Have quiet time between a feeding and bedtime. Bathe or read to your baby. Talk softly. Dim the lights in baby's room.
- Know when your baby is getting tired. He may get fussy, yawn, become quiet or have a glazed look.
- Put baby to bed when he is tired, but before he is asleep.
- Expect baby to fuss or cry a little when going to sleep.
- During the night, if your baby wakes and it is not time for a feeding, let her fuss a little and try to go back to sleep. If after about 5 minutes she is still crying, go to her.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
or log onto www.parenthelpline.org