

**16 Quick Tips on Sleep**  
**Evidence based advice for safer, happier sleep!**

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Normal or “Average” Sleep Patterns for Babies

age	total hours of night sleep	total naps and hours of each
newborn-3 months	3-5 hours	3-5 naps lasting 20 minutes- 4 hours
4-6 months	4-6 hours	3 naps lasting 40 minutes- 3 hours
7-12 months	6-10 hours	2 naps lasting 1 hour- 3 hours

16 Quick Tips on Sleep

1. Do respond to your babies cries. Young babies do not understand when their cries are ignored; it creates distrust that their needs will not be taken care of. Babies cry for a reason. You will not spoil your baby by responding to their cries, you will build a healthy relationship of trust that will help them develop into independent and confident children and young adults.
2. Babies are not physiologically made to sleep through the night. Be wary of books or advice that recommends that you sleep train your baby at a young age. This can put your child at risk for breathing, temperature, weight and heart rate regulation. Babies have small stomachs and need to be fed frequently, requiring them to awaken several times through the night.
3. Co-sleeping means that a baby/ child sleeps in the same room as a caring adult. Bed-sharing means that a baby/child sleeps in the same bed as a caring adult. Bed-sharing is co-sleeping, however co-sleeping is not necessarily bed-sharing. Research shows that co-sleeping for the first 6 months is recommended because it helps your child regulate their sleeping patterns, breathing, and temperature. Breastfeeding success is higher when baby’s sleep close to their mother’s as well. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend bed-sharing, despite the research in Europe that shows that it is completely safe if done properly by a caring healthy adult and even reduces the SIDs rates in those countries. **AAP DOES RECOMMEND CO-SLEEPING** for the first 6 months.
4. Create a set, consistent time for your baby to go to sleep for the night and wake up in the morning. All of our biological clocks do better with consistency. Most young children will do better with an early bedtime 6-8pm, and an early waking time 5-7am. Studies also show cancer rates are lower in all ages when they go to sleep with the darkness and rise with the sunshine.
5. Develop a predictable bedtime routine. A routine may include warm bath, pajamas, brushing teeth, a cuddle while reading stories, and soft rhythmic music while falling asleep.
6. Young children need naps to sleep well at night. The higher quality of the nap will also mean higher quality of night time sleep.

7. Good ventilation in the space baby is sleeping is important. Always err on the cool side, since babies cry when they are cold, but sleep too deep if they are hot. Fresh air is always better than stuffy air. If you use central heat during the winter, you might consider running a high quality humidifier to keep the sinuses moist.
8. Healthy food helps the body regulate energy levels. Carbohydrates and magnesium rich foods help promote relaxation and sleepiness. Whole grains are much healthier choices for carbohydrates than processed foods like crackers, breads and cereals. Leafy greens tend to be high in magnesium.
9. Daily exercise helps the body feel tired at the end of the day and burns up some of that endless energy children have. It balances the body's fat, muscles, and hormones for optimal growth. Exercise an hour before bed can have the opposite effect though, energizing rather than calming, so get it done earlier in the day.
10. Daily sunshine triggers brain chemicals into developing a normal wake and sleep cycle. Plus fresh air and Vitamin D promotes good health.
11. Humans thrive on touch. Massaging, stroking, patting, gentle touch communicates to your child at the deepest level your love. It increases relaxation and calming reflexes by stimulating anti-stress hormones, relaxing hormones, increases physical and mental growth, strengthens the immune system, and a great way to increase your bond with your baby/child.
12. Young baby's will benefit from gentle movement that mimics the womb. Gentle rocking and walking with baby in arms helps baby's feel safe, warm, and calm and therefore will fall asleep quicker and enjoy a higher quality of sleep.
13. A warm bath soothes the body, invigorates the respiratory system, and relaxes the mind. Avoid bubble baths which irritate the skin and the urinary track, which can cause bladder infections in young children. A few drops of Lavender essential oil also promotes calming and relaxation. Artificial scents will not work and may even cause hyperactivity in a child.
14. Reading bedtime stories, poems, tales while cuddling is an effective way of inducing relaxation and sleep. Reading to your child daily also has long term benefits of teaching them the rhythm of language, pre-reading skills, and a positive example that reading is good/fun.
15. Babies should have no or very limited exposure to television, video games and computers. Especially an hour before bed time since it revs up the brain waves and makes it more difficult for sleep.
16. Children should NEVER be given alcohol, street drugs, or over the counter drugs to induce sleep (unless prescribed and advised by pediatrician) as they are toxic and highly addictive.

*Resources Used for This Handout-*

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