

# Your baby's sleep at... 0-3 months

## Your sleeping baby

Sleep is not under our control and cannot be forced.

Here is how it happens:

At this age there is a huge variation in the amount of time your baby will sleep - it can range from just over 9 hours to 20 hours.

- Sleep cycles are short at about 45 minutes. Your baby has a very small stomach and needs to feed around the clock to meet their needs. Although managing night feeds can be challenging, it is also a quiet time away from the busyness of the day.
- It's not until around 8-12 weeks that your baby's circadian rhythm (sleep-wake cycle) matures enough for them to begin to tell night from day.
- Babies have increased amounts of Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep so will wake more easily. It is thought that the sleep cycle and arousal from sleep is a protective mechanism against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- At this stage it is advised that you have your baby in the same room as you (day and night when sleeping), until at least 6 months of age.
- A baby's brain needs lots of energy as it is growing at a very fast rate, so babies need to be fed responsively.



## Recognising sleep cues

- These can vary from baby to baby, but you will begin to recognise your own baby's cues over time. The cues will also change as they grow.

*Continued overleaf...*

- 
- 
- They may yawn, rub their eyes, pull at their ears, become quieter, or you may notice them frowning, pulling their hair, being less engaged and responsive, a glazed look, drooping eyes, they may want to suck/feed, or arch backwards. However, becoming irritable and beginning to cry are late signs and can lead to your baby becoming over-tired.

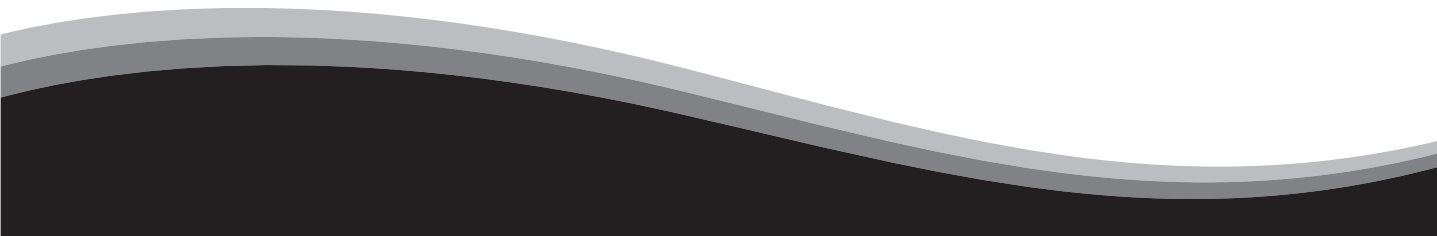
## What can affect sleep?

- **Environment.** The first 3 months of your baby's life, moving from the security of the womb to the outside world, is a period of huge change. Keeping their environment mainly calm and quiet can help with this transition.
- **Sensory over stimulation.** This can lead to your baby being unable to fall asleep easily and they may appear unsettled, cry and take a lot longer to relax into sleep.
- **Growth and development.** This is a time when you will be getting to know your baby and when they will be growing and developing at a very fast rate. You may notice your baby waking more for feeds which may indicate a growth spurt, which usually last for just a few days.
- **Minor ailments.** Coughs, colds etc.
- **Changes in routine.** Going away on holiday or moving house.

## Your baby's development

- Your baby will be starting to respond to voices and will quieten when you speak to them if they are crying. They will also begin to recognise how you are feeling as well.
- They will start to smile and to make cooing sounds; these are the beginnings of speech and communication. When you are talking to your baby you may begin to notice them pausing to listen, this is the two way process of communication developing. All of this interaction with your baby will be helping to stimulate their brain. Babies are born with millions of nerve pathways in their brain and the more these are stimulated the more they will grow and become permanent.
- Your baby will want to be close to you day and night, you cannot spoil your baby with love, cuddles and attention. Keeping your baby close releases oxytocin, known as 'the love hormone', in both you and your baby, making you both feel relaxed and calm. Studies suggest that babies who are held, have all their needs met and are not left to cry for long periods, will cry less, be more settled and become more confident toddlers and children.

## Ideas to support you and your baby

- **Environment.** Keep the environment as calm as possible, limiting visitors to reduce overstimulation. Natural daylight in the day and dim lighting (red lights are thought to be helpful) at night. Babies may find night-time too quiet, so white noise may help.
- 

- **Relaxation.** Keep your baby close and have skin-to-skin contact, do baby massage or have a warm bath with your baby. Using a sling will allow you to have your hands free and to keep your baby close so they can hear your heartbeat and be settled by your gentle movements.
- **Feeds.** You will begin to notice your baby's cues for feeding. It is a good idea to feed your baby when you see or hear early feeding cues, such as sucking fingers, restlessness, or murmuring sounds. This will help your baby remain relaxed and more likely to be able to go back to sleep easily after the feed. If you are breastfeeding, it is always okay to offer the breast for comfort (you cannot overfeed a breastfed baby) which can also help your baby to fall asleep. If you choose to bottle feed, paced and responsive feeding can stop your baby feeling overfull or uncomfortable, both of which could affect sleep. Night feeds are important to nourish your baby. If breastfeeding, night is when prolactin, the hormone that makes milk, is highest.
- **Practical ideas.** If you have someone to support you they can help with nappy changing in the night, and with jobs around the house such as cooking and cleaning. Keep your baby close to you at night to make night-time feeds easier. If you are breastfeeding you may find lying down to feed easier (see useful websites below). If you are bottle feeding, bring boiled water upstairs in a flask to help minimise disruption. Try to rest or sleep in the day when possible, using mindfulness techniques to help with relaxation - use NHS Choices or apps such as Headspace.

As a service we do not recommend any sleep modification/training techniques that involve leaving your baby/child to cry, such as controlled crying, pick up/put down. Recent evidence highlights the importance of responding to all of their needs responsively, in order to achieve optimum health and emotional wellbeing for your child.

**For further support or information please contact your health visiting team.**

### Useful websites

Caring for your baby at night - a guide for parents, Off to the best start and Guide to bottle feeding  
[www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk)

Infant sleep information source  
[www.isisonline.org.uk](http://www.isisonline.org.uk)

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net)

October 2019 Version 1