



## A Sleep Schedule for Baby

**With a little patience and hard work, you can create a routine that will allow you and your baby to get the rest you both need. Setting the baby's "body clock" from the beginning will also help your little one develop healthy sleep patterns for life.**

Newborns up to two months old usually need 11 to 18 hours of sleep each day, and 11 to 15 hours a day for the rest of their first year. Newborns wake up when they need food, so don't be surprised if your new baby only sleeps for 2 to 3 hours at a stretch before waking up hungry.

Sleep habits are usually the first ones you will notice your baby forming shortly after birth. It may be a struggle at first to get your baby to sleep at designated nap and bedtimes or stay asleep through the night. By keeping them on a schedule, babies' sleep cycles become longer, more regular and more focused on nighttime sleep by the time they are four months old.

### **Here are some does and don'ts for creating your baby's routine:**

- Consistency is key. Determine your baby's sleep schedule—when to take naps, wake up, be put down for the night and be awakened in the morning. Share this schedule with anyone who cares for your baby.
- Create a morning routine. Feed the baby its breakfast followed by stimulating activities like a walk or play that your child can begin to associate with this part of their day.
- Make sure that your baby is regularly around bright light during the day to help its body develop circadian rhythms linked to light cycles. (Make sure that you shield your baby's eyes and skin from direct sunlight, and apply sunscreen before taking your baby outside.)
- Try to eliminate excess stimulation about a half an hour before the baby's designated nap or bedtime. Work on soothing them to prepare for sleep.
- Put the baby in "day" clothes for naps and "night" clothes for bedtime. Babies pick up on these cues.

- Let your baby nap only 2 to 3 hours. Wake them if not already awake. You don't want them to become too reliant on naps or overly rested when bedtime comes.
- Use a designated area for sleep and keep the room quiet so the baby will learn to associate this time with sleep.
- Make sure that your baby gets enough sleep while still keeping him or her on an increasingly regular schedule.
- Don't use feeding as a way to get a baby to sleep or they will grow dependent on this method. If your baby falls asleep while feeding, wake him or her before placing them in the crib. Don't worry if they fuss at first. Babies need to learn to comfort themselves to sleep.
- Don't rock your baby to sleep or they will develop a need for the rocking motion in order to go to sleep and stay asleep. Rock the baby until drowsy, then put them in the crib while still awake.
- Don't allow your baby to get overly tired or overstimulated with play right before bedtime.
- Develop a bedtime routine that you can stick to every night. Maybe a bath, diaper change and feeding followed by a lullaby. Place them in their crib, and let them know in a gentle, loving way that it's time to sleep. Leave the room before they fall asleep to keep them from relying on your being there.

Establishing good sleeping habits for your baby may require a bit of effort and patience early on, but it will be well worth it.



*Baby Product Experts specialty stores provide safe, high-quality products and expert advice.*