



# Parent Newsletter

## Hush Little Baby: *The Importance of Sleep*

One of the hardest challenges parents face with child rearing is getting their child(ren) to sleep through the night. Any sleep-deprived parent can tell you how important sleep is. Experts tell us that sleep is a critical time for brain growth. During sleep our bodies grow and our brain releases growth hormones. Our mind sorts through all those experiences from the day. Some experts also believe sleep affects our immune system, hormonal balance, and memory retention.

Here are some tips and guidelines to help your little one(s) – and you get some much-needed sleep

### Q & A:

- 1. How much sleep does my baby need each day?**  
Newborns typically need 15-18 hours. That is usually broken into 2-4 hour intervals throughout the day.  
6 month olds need on average 14-15 hours each day.  
18 month olds need on average 13-14 hours each day.  
3 year olds need on average 12-13 each day.
- 2. Is it true that we should keep babies up longer to make them sleep better?**  
Experts tell us that this isn't the case. Research tells us that a well-rested baby will sleep better than a baby who is over-tired.
- 3. What is a bedtime routine?**
  - Start your bedtime routine at the same time each night.
  - Give your child a warm bath.
  - Give your child a bedtime massage – using gentle strokes. Talk quietly. You may enjoy soft music.
  - Sing a song or read a board book with him. Give gentle touches as you share the story.
  - Follow your sleep routine. This might include nursing her to sleep, rocking her to sleep, or laying her in her crib to relax. Gentle touches will release relaxing hormones for both of you.
- 4. Should I let them cry it out?**  
Experts tell us that babies cry to let us know something is wrong. When babies cry at night, they are communicating they need something. Even if



## Resources You Might Like...

1. *Goodnight Moon* by Margret Wise Brown. This book is a comforting way to say goodnight and encourages feelings of security.
2. *Goo Night, Sleep Tight* by Kim West.
3. *Llama Red Pajamas* by Anne Dewdney. This rhyming story shows how a llama who is afraid of the dark is reassured by his mother.
4. *Sleeping With Your Baby: A Parents' Guide to Co-Sleeping* by James McKenna.
5. *The No Cry Sleep Solution: Gentle Ways to Help Your Baby Sleep Through the Night* by Elizabeth Pantley.

While Infant Massage USA does not endorse any of these specific products, some parents have found them helpful:

- a. [Halo Sleep Sack](#)
- b. [Angel Care Monitors](#) sense each baby's breath.
- c. [Arm's Reach Co-Sleepers](#) attach to your bed so you can be close to your baby while you sleep at night.



## Parent Perspective

When we don't get enough sleep, we feel tired, irritable, and may have a hard time focusing on work and daily tasks. Believe it or not, you need sleep as much as your baby! It's easy to get caught up in the mindset of thinking, "Now that they're down, I can finally get caught up on things around the house." While that may be true, it can sometimes lead us to work for hours and miss out on valuable sleep time. A wise woman once told me, "When your baby sleeps... you should sleep." If we get the rest we need, we will feel refreshed the next morning. I had a friend who referred to their bedroom as the "Duncan Family Camp Grounds." She kept the crib attached to their king-sized bed, and a twin-sized mattress at the foot of it for her other child. She talks about how precious those moments were and how reassuring it was to know they were safe and sound within an arm's reach when they needed her.

How can you get more zzz?

1. *Drink some calming tea* (decaffeinated works well.)
2. *Take a warm bath* and add some lavender or chamomile.
3. *Read something you enjoy* helping you relax.
4. *Avoid flashing lights* in your room such as late night TV or a flashing alarm clock.
5. *Avoid stressful discussions* before bedtime because your brain will have a hard time calming down from all the emotion and problem solving that has hyped it up.
6. *Avoid exercise* right before bedtime. While it is healthy earlier in the day, it can keep you up at night.
7. *Cuddle with your baby.* When your baby rests better, so do you!

Please send your stories to  
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We'd love to include you in our  
Parent Perspective section.

## Q&A Continued

it's just your reassuring presence, babies need you. When we provide that loving relationship, we encourage attachment. When babies feel safe, they can rest better and grow healthy!

5. *Why do they have trouble sleeping sometimes?*  
Babies and children often have the same problems we do as adults. A gassy tummy, feeling uncomfortable in a hot or cold room, or new teeth that are causing pain can all lead to sleep disruptions. Learn their sleep patterns and watch your baby's cues. They will give you signs as to some of the problems causing restlessness.
6. *What is SIDS?*  
SIDS stands for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. No one knows for sure what causes SIDS, however, it occurs more frequently during the first year of life. It also appears there are some things that can increase the risk of SIDS such as smoking near your baby or letting them get too hot. [Click to read the American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) recommendations.](#)



## Experts Give These Recommendations for Safe Sleeping:

- If you choose to sleep with your baby be sure there is no loose bedding near his face.
- Lay your baby on her back while she sleeps if using a crib.
- Keep your baby close by placing the bassinet or crib within arms reach. There are products such as co-sleepers that are baby beds that attach to your bed.
- Avoid any loose clothing, bumper pads, blankets, pillows, or stuffed animals. These items can pose a suffocation hazard.
- If you use a crib, make sure the mattress fits securely and that it is in good shape.
- Avoid smoking near your baby.
- Avoid letting your baby get too hot.
- Breastfeed your infant if possible. Breastfeed babies are less likely to suffer from SIDS.
- Talk with babysitters or family members about safe sleep practices when they care for your child.
- Let your baby sleep in a "wearable blanket" that fits your child. He can wear it instead of using loose bedding.

If you have any ideas, thoughts or suggestions for our Parent Newsletter, I'd love to hear from you! Please email me at: [cwhittington@infantmassageusa.org](mailto:cwhittington@infantmassageusa.org).