



When will my baby sleep through the night?

FIRST-TIME PARENTS

ARTICLE

JAN 5, 2021

4 MINS

When your baby first comes home from the hospital, his irregular sleep patterns can be both challenging and exhausting. With little care for day or night, your new little bundle will probably wake often for feedings, diaper changes, or comfort. Be assured that this won't last forever and by six months, 24 hours in the life of your baby will look very different.

One of the most commonly asked questions by new parents is: "When will my baby sleep through the night?" The answer is less straightforward than you might think. Your baby's sleep patterns will change dramatically from the first few weeks to six months (and yours will too!). Newborns also have special nutritional needs so how often, and how much, they feed is important.

First weeks

During the first month, you'll be getting to know your baby and his sleep cycles. Be

prepared for him to wake up frequently throughout the night. Night wakings are normal and necessary for newborns because their tummies are tiny and they need to eat frequently.

For the first month after your baby is born, you should wake him if four hours have passed since his last feeding. He will need breast milk at least every four hours during these early weeks. Once he is one month old and is growing well, you no longer need to wake him for a feeding.

Your baby will be easier to wake up if he's in "active" sleep – look for twitching and fluttering eyelids. Some tips for waking him up from a heavier, deep sleep include changing his diaper, or even giving his back, stomach, or legs a little massage.

If you find that your baby is having a hard time staying awake during regular feedings or falling asleep at the breast frequently, ask your healthcare provider to check if your baby is at a healthy weight.

Settling into a routine

By around three months, your baby may still wake up at night to feed, but he will begin to sleep for longer periods of time between feedings. Because his stomach isn't as tiny, he can go for longer stretches without needing to eat.

Consistency and routine are key to establishing healthy sleep patterns for your baby. These practices have been shown in scientific studies to help increase the amount of sleep a baby gets. Not following some of these practices has even been linked to less sleep and more night wakings.

Why is sleep important?

Adequate sleep time for babies is needed for their healthy growth and development. You can help your baby develop good sleep habits. Scientific studies show that babies who have a regular bedtime routine and consistent sleep schedules are more likely to learn good sleep habits early in life. These good habits are then more likely to continue through childhood.

How sleep patterns develop

Between two and three months, many babies may be able to sleep for a five-hour stretch during the night. Some people consider this to be sleeping through the night – and it may feel like it to you compared with the early days. This may not happen every night at first, but it indicates that more structured sleep is beginning. The expectation that your baby will sleep an eight-hour stretch is more likely after six months of age.

One way to think about your baby's night-time sleep is to ask yourself if your baby sleeps well, wakes for feedings, and is able to settle himself right back to sleep. If the answer is yes, then your baby is a good sleeper. Being aware of your baby's sleep needs and starting a bedtime routine early will give him the chance to learn good sleep habits while he's young.

Remember that the sleep skills your baby develops now set the stage for his sleep habits when he is older. So the time you invest in helping your baby learn good sleep techniques now will have a positive impact on his healthy growth in the future.

Sources

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