

Sleep for the Breastfed Baby

RESOURCE GUIDE

Helpful Links

- [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) - Safe Sleep Guidelines](#)
- [Sleep Development in Healthy Babies](#)
- [Feeding Cues and Frequency](#)
- [Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\) - Safe Sleep](#)
- [CPSC - Sleep Positioners](#)
- [Hip Healthy Swaddling](#)
- [SIDS Prevention](#)
- [Safe Sleep 7](#)
- [Bedsharing and Breastfeeding](#)
- [Physiologic Infant Care](#)
- [Where Babies Sleep](#)
- [Breastsleeping](#)
- [Nighttime Breastfeeding](#)
- [Safe Bedsharing](#)
- [Normal Baby Sleep](#)
- [Breastfeeding a Sleepy Baby](#)
- [Sleep Products to Avoid](#)
- [Swaddling - Impact on Lactation](#)



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Sleep for the Breastfed Baby

Class Notes

Historically, sleep recommendations have not matched normal, biological sleep patterns for newborns.

Current Recommendations for Infant Sleep

- **Babies should:**
 - Be breastfed.
 - Be laid to sleep on their backs.
 - Room-in with their parents.
- **Parents should:**
 - Be patient in learning baby's cues.
 - Quickly respond to baby's needs for comfort and food.



What is Normal Baby Sleep?

- Normal sleep behaviors for human babies include:
 - Waking at night and needing close contact.
 - Needing to stay close to their mothers to feed often.
 - Needing their mothers for warmth and safety.
 - Trusting that their needs will be met.
 - Making noises and moving a lot while sleeping.
 - Having short sleep cycles and waking often.

Benefits to Night Waking

- Night wakings are protective against **SIDS**.
- Babies **START** to develop a day/night circadian rhythm around 3-4 months.
- **Sleep Development in Healthy Babies**
- **Feeding Cues & Frequency**
- **Nighttime Breastfeeding**

Infant Sleep Facts

- **49% of infants are still waking at least 1-2 times per night at 12 months.**
- Formula fed and breastfed infants get similar amounts of sleep.
- **“Sleeping through the night” is defined as sleeping a 5 hour stretch at night.**
- Your baby is getting enough sleep if they are alert and generally happy during awake periods.
- Many sleep devices are **not safe**:
 - Inclined sleepers
 - **Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) warning**
 - Sleep positioners & devices
 - **CPSC and FDA warning**
 - Bassinets that secure baby to sleep surface.
 - Weighted swaddles or weighted blankets.
 - Sleep suits (not to be confused with sleep sacks which can be used).
 - If using a noise machine, it should be 7 feet away from baby, on the lowest setting and used sparingly. ✓



What to Expect (Ages 0-8 weeks)

- Babies tend to have an initial quiet-alert phase just after birth.
 - During this time focus on skin to skin and baby's first feedings
- After the quiet-alert phase, babies have a period of sleepiness for 24 hours.
- It is normal for babies to cluster feed on the 2nd/3rd day and night after birth.
- Feed baby when they are showing hunger cues.
- You should wake your newborn to feed if not yet at his or her birth weight and baby has slept for a period of more than 2-3 hours.
- Breastfed newborns need to eat at least 8-12 times in 24 hours.
- It is important to not go more than one 5 hour stretch of sleep at night.

Give Special Attention to Sleepy Babies

- If your baby needs to be awakened for most feedings or falls asleep quickly at the breast, reach out to your pediatrician and IBCLC
- **Breastfeeding a Sleepy Baby**

Breastfeeding to Sleep is Normal

- Babies usually need additional comfort measure to fall asleep until they are developmentally ready to fall asleep on their own.
- Breast milk contains sleep-inducing hormones like melatonin.
- Oxytocin and prolactin release can help a mom fall back to sleep more easily.

Tips for Setting Your Baby's Circadian Clock

- Ensure your baby has lots of rich environmental experiences throughout the day
- Expose baby to natural light during the day
- Keep things dark and quiet at night



Sleep Cues

- Common sleep cues in baby:
 - rubbing the eyes
 - yawning
 - drooping eyelids
 - redness around the eyes
 - smiling and vocalizing less
 - suckling more softly
 - turning away from toys or people

Sleep Periods

- Newborn full-term infants typically:
 - Sleep 14-17 hours per day for the first 4 weeks of life.
 - Sleep an average of 30-70 minutes per sleep cycle.
 - The number of hours of sleep your baby needs may be different from what other babies need.
 - Don't try to force sleep on a specific schedule or pattern.

Naps

- There is a wide range of normal for naps which will make awake window unpredictable.
- Trying to get baby to take more naps during the day can disrupt nighttime sleep.
- Trust that baby will naturally drift off for naps as needed.

Why Did My Baby's Sleep Patterns Change?

- Recent illness
- Travel
- Change in daily routine
- Change of the seasons
- Growth spurt
- Teething
- Mom returned to work
- Rolling over
- Changes in temperature or lighting



Sleeping Through the Night

- Sleeping through the night is a developmental milestone that different babies will reach at different times.
- **Try not to compare your baby's sleep patterns to others - every baby is different.**
- Under the direction of your provider, your baby may be able to sleep longer periods of time if they are meeting their growth milestones, gaining weight, having plenty of wet and messy diapers and feeding well.
- If your baby sleeps for longer periods and you notice your milk supply is decreasing, you can try to do a dream feed or pump in place of a feeding to maintain your milk supply.
- Frequent removal of milk from the breasts signals your body to produce more milk.

Sleep Coaching

- The person assisting you should understand the unique needs of breastfeeding babies.
- Protect your breastfeeding relationship by noticing baby's cues, respond as needed and minimize the use of sleep products.

We DO NOT recommend programs that promote the following:

- Specified sleep, wake, and feeding windows.
- Scheduled feedings.
- Restricting feedings to a certain amount of time.
- Not responding to baby's needs at night.
- Restricting night time feedings before baby shows signs of readiness and is at least 6 months old.
- Any version of Cry-It-Out.
- Attempts to help a young baby self-soothe.
- The use of products to increase baby's sleep beyond what is biologically normal.

Sleep is not a skill that can be taught.



Tips for Getting More Rest with a Newborn

- Habits for baby:
 - Notice and respond to sleep cues.
 - Assist your baby to get to sleep whenever needed.
 - Create predictability in baby's bedtime routine.
 - Breastfeed baby to sleep.
- Habits for Mom:
 - Prioritize sleep. Create consistency.
 - Get sunlight exposure and some light exercise.
 - Go to bed a little earlier at night.
 - **Partner Support While Breastfeeding**
- At night:
 - Sleep near your baby.
 - Limit getting up out of bed at night.
 - Keep lighting dim.
 - Offer a “dream feed.”
- During the day:
 - Do something that restores and energizes you while baby sleeps.
 - Make life as simple as possible in your early postpartum.
 - Say “NO” to extra obligations.
 - Know your limitations both physically and mentally.
 - **When You Want to Give Up**
 - **Wear your baby** in a baby-wrap or carrier.



Safe Sleep

- [Safe Infant Sleep Guidelines](#)
- [Safe Sleep 7](#)
- [Bedsharing and Breastfeeding](#)
- [Breastsleeping](#)
- [Safe Bedsharing](#)

Sleep Support

- Disrupted sleep can take a toll on our mental health.
- If you find that you need additional support, please join our [Sleep Q&A](#).

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Disclaimer: This class is intended for general education purposes only and should not replace any medical direction from your healthcare provider. Please seek advice from your own healthcare provider and lactation consultant (IBCLC) for individualized recommendations.

