

## Sleeping in Newborns

Newborns sleep a lot. They usually wake every two to four hours to eat. Their stomachs only hold enough to sustain them for two to four hours so “round the clock” feedings are necessary until they are two to four months of age. Ninety percent of infants sleep through the night (six hours) by three months of age. This, however, is usually weight dependent, and occurs when a baby reaches 13 to 14 pounds. So if your baby is large, he/ she may sleep through the night sooner.

Some newborns have their days and nights mixed up when they first come home from the hospital. The best way to approach this is to not allow them to sleep for more than three and a half hours during the day. Wake your infant for feedings by changing his diaper, undressing him, or tickling his feet. During the day, keep him in an area where there is activity, noise and light to stimulate him. At night, when longer sleep periods are desired, placing your infant in a dark, quiet room in his crib or bassinet is preferred.

Between four and six months of age, infants begin napping regularly during the day. During naps, placing your child in his crib where he sleeps at night will allow him to know that his crib is the place where he should sleep. Usually, by six months of age, infants take two naps per day—a morning and an afternoon nap. Some will also take an early evening “cat nap” as well.

Frequently, after sleeping through the night for a period of time, between five and seven months of age, infants will again start waking at night. There are many different reasons for this, including teething and a normal developmental phase. Check on your infant and make sure he is not ill, let him stay in his crib, comfort him, pat him on the back, change him if needed. The pattern of night sleeping will soon return.

Remember, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies be positioned on their backs when sleeping. Newborns should sleep in the same room as parents initially, on a surface free of pillows, sheets, and toys. The bed should have sides to prevent falling out of bed as the baby quickly becomes increasingly active. He or she should never be on a raised surface such as a bed or couch without supervision, even briefly.

Books about child sleep we recommend:

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child

By: Marc Weissbluth, MD

Solve Your Child’s Sleep Problems

By: Richard Ferber, MD