

- Allow him to suck on a dummy or thumb (dummies should not be used until breastfeeding is established at about six weeks).
- Use a baby sling so your baby is close and can hear your heart beat. This may help him settle and allow you to do a few household tasks.

### Look after yourself

Almost all adults find interrupted sleep makes them feel tired and irritable, and relationships can suffer.

- Try to keep your own life not too hectic when the baby is young.
- Take breaks when you can.
- Catch up on sleep. Sleep or rest when your baby sleeps, day and night.
- Take the phone off the hook.
- Ask for and accept help when it is offered.
- Put a DO NOT DISTURB sign on your front door.
- Remember to get some exercise – walking is good.
- Join a group of other new parents.

### For more information contact

- Local community child health nurse  
See inside your baby's purple 'All About Me' book, in the phone directory under 'Child Health Centres' or [www.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.health.wa.gov.au)
- Local family doctor
- Ngala Helpline  
8:00am–8:00pm 7 days a week  
Telephone (08) 9368 9368  
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 111 546  
[www.ngala.com.au](http://www.ngala.com.au)
- Parenting WA Line  
Telephone (08) 6279 1200 (24hr service)  
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 654 432

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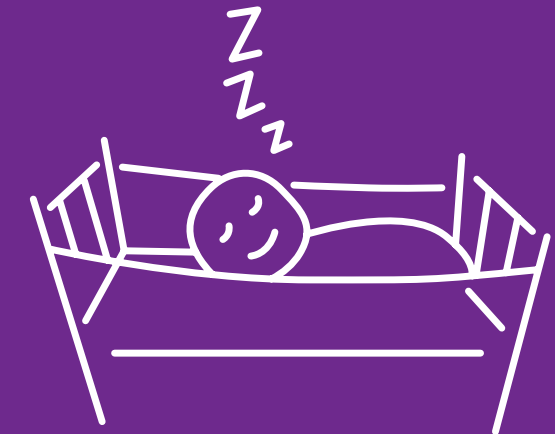
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sleep  
birth - 3 months



## Baby sleep

In the first few weeks after birth, babies sleep much of the day and night. Most wake two to three times during the night for feeds.

Babies have shorter sleep cycles than adults and wake or stir about every 40 minutes.

By three months, many babies will have settled into a pattern of longer times awake during the day, and longer sleep times (perhaps four to five hours) at night. Most will still be waking once or twice during the night for feeds.

Sleeping in the same room with parents is safest for young babies. Sharing a bed with a baby has led to the deaths of some babies.

Secure attachments in infancy are the base for good mental health. A major need for secure attachment is for a parent to respond to infant needs and cues. It is important not to leave your baby to cry.

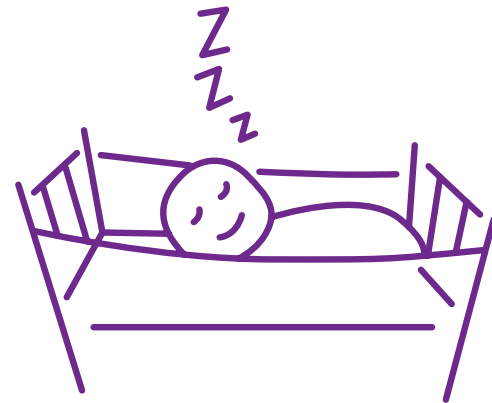
## Daytime and night time patterns

- Very young babies have little idea of day or night and most wake regularly around the clock every two or three hours needing a feed and attention.
- In the first few months it is common for babies to wake regularly at night for feeds at least two or three times. As a guide, many babies sleep 14-20 hours a day in the first weeks.
- By three months many are settled into a pattern of longer sleep times – perhaps four to five hours at night. When a baby sleeps about 5 hours straight this is considered 'sleeping through the night'.

## Ideas for settling

### Routines to get ready for sleep

- At this age babies are often relaxed and sleepy after a feed. Some develop a pattern of waking often and needing a feed to settle. Some babies are helped by a daytime pattern of feed and then settling after a small play, cuddle, talk and touch. Watch your baby's signals for when he is alert and wanting to play and when he is sleepy.
- Some young babies tend to be more wakeful in the evening or night rather than during the day. It helps babies learn about day and night if you settle them at night in a quiet, dark place and don't play with them or do anything that makes them more wakeful.
- Even with young babies you can start a bedtime ritual. You may sing a little song, kiss goodnight, find the dummy (if he has one) and then give a gentle kiss with some special soft words of love when you put him down.



## Tired signs – sleep cues

As you get to know your baby you will start to learn when he is sleepy and needs to be put down for sleep. Long before they can talk babies have tired signs or sleep cues in their behaviour that show you what they need. Your baby will have his own special sleep cues but here are some that most babies have that will give you a start in watching for your baby's cues:

- yawning
- jerky movements
- becoming quiet, not wanting to play
- "grizzling" or fussing
- rubbing their eyes
- making a sleepy sound
- crying
- facial grimaces, i.e. pulling faces
- clenched fists
- waving arms and legs about.

If you miss the tired signs and don't help your baby to settle your baby may get more alert and overtired and be very hard to get to relax and sleep. Signs that the baby has got overtired include being very overactive, stare-y eyes, and being very quick to cry.

## Settling

Put your baby on his back for sleep. Often a tired newborn will accept being put into his crib while awake and will fall asleep on his own. Some new babies settle best in a quiet, dark place, others settle more easily in lighter, noisier places. Some babies are harder to settle than others and many need help to relax into sleep.

Some things to try to settle your baby:

- Wrap him in a thin cotton sheet.
- Rock him in a pram, crib or your arms for a short period and then settle him into bed (a baby should not be left to sleep unsupervised in a pram).
- Settle him in the crib and then pat him with a cupped hand. Start patting quickly and then slow down as he calms. Pat at about the pace of your heartbeat.
- Push him in a pram back and forth over a bumpy surface such as the edge between your carpet and tiles or over footpath bumps.
- Have some constant noise such as humming, singing a little song, relaxing music or household noise – some babies relax if they can hear the vibration noise of the washing machine or dryer.
- Check that he is not too hot or cold, and that clothing is not too tight.
- A warm bath.
- Offer another feed, (often called a 'top-up' feed).