



Rest for baby, sanity for you

Baby Sleep Guide (0-3 Months)

Evidence-based guidance for navigating newborn sleep - what's normal and what helps

Newborn sleep is survival mode, not training time. Babies under 3 months can't be "spoiled" - they need you. This guide helps you understand what's developmentally normal and create gentle foundations for better sleep ahead.

What to Expect by Age

0-4 Weeks

The "Fourth Trimester"

Total sleep: 14-17 hours/day

Longest stretch: 2-4 hours

Reality: No day/night awareness yet. Frequent feeding (every 2-3 hours). Lots of holding is normal and good.

4-8 Weeks

Emerging Patterns

Total sleep: 14-16 hours/day

Longest stretch: 3-4 hours

Reality: Day/night starting to differentiate. Fussiest period (peak crying around 6 weeks). One longer sleep stretch emerging.

8-12 Weeks

Finding Rhythm

Total sleep: 14-16 hours/day

Longest stretch: 4-6 hours

Reality: More predictable patterns. Some babies sleep 5-6 hour stretches. Social smiles appear - it's worth it!



ABCs of Safe Sleep - Every Sleep, Every Time

Alone

Baby sleeps alone - no blankets, pillows, toys, bumpers

Back

Always on back until rolling both ways

Crib

Firm, flat surface with fitted sheet only

Room Share

Same room, separate surface for 6-12 months

No Smoking

Smoke-free home and car always

Pacifier

Offer at sleep after breastfeeding established

Day/Night Confusion Tips

- 1 Daytime: Keep it bright, loud, and active during wake windows
- 2 Nighttime: Dim lights, whisper voices, minimal interaction at feeds
- 3 Morning: Get outside within first hour of waking - sunlight sets circadian rhythm
- 4 Evening: Start dimming lights 1-2 hours before bedtime
- 5 Night feeds: Don't change diaper unless soiled - it wakes them too much

Gentle Sleep Foundations

- 1 Full feeds: Keep baby awake during feeding to get full meal
- 2 Wake windows: 45-90 min max before overtired (watch baby, not clock)
- 3 Swaddle: Snug swaddle mimics womb - stop when rolling starts
- 4 White noise: Loud as a shower (50-65 dB), run all sleep periods
- 5 Drowsy but awake: Try putting down sleepy, not fully asleep (no pressure!)

Reading Baby's Sleep Cues

Early Tired Signs (Act now!)

- Looking away, breaking eye contact
- Slower movements, less engaged
- Red eyebrows or around eyes
- Yawning (the first yawn = go time!)
- Fussing, mild whimpering

Overtired Signs (You missed the window)

- Back arching, pushing away
- Frantic hand movements
- Intense crying, hard to soothe
- Rubbing eyes, ears, face
- Stiff limbs, clenched fists

Soothing Techniques

- ✓ Swaddle snugly
- ✓ Shush loudly in ear
- ✓ Swing/rock rhythmically
- ✓ Side/stomach position (while holding)
- ✓ Suck (pacifier or finger)
- ✓ Skin-to-skin contact

Sleep Myths Busted

- ✗ "Never wake a sleeping baby"
- ✓ Wake to feed until birth weight regained
- ✗ "Keep them up to sleep better"
- ✓ Overtired babies sleep worse
- ✗ "Rice cereal helps them sleep"
- ✓ No evidence, and not safe before 4mo

Parent Survival Tips

- ✓ Sleep when baby sleeps (at least once)
- ✓ Trade off with partner for one 4-hr stretch
- ✓ Accept help from anyone offering
- ✓ Lower all other standards temporarily
- ✓ This phase is temporary (really)
- ✓ Safe sleep > perfect sleep

- ✓ Warm bath before bed
- ✓ Gentle pressure on chest

- ✗ "Holding too much spoils them"
- ✓ You cannot spoil a newborn

- ✓ Fed baby = good parenting
- ✓ Your mental health matters too