



How does your Newborn Sleep?

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Most newborns require the assistance of an adult to help them go to sleep, and get back to sleep during the day and night.

Young babies need to feed through the night and particularly in the first month or so they will wake every 2 – 4 hours for a feed (breastfed babies) or 3 - 5 hours (bottle-fed babies).

You can expect to have your sleep interrupted for the first few months and it is important for you to look after yourself. Sleep when your baby sleeps during the day in order for you to regain some sleep. Baby's crying and sleeping issues are often associated with parents concerns about feeding.

Generally speaking crying begins to increase at approximately 2 weeks post-birth and peaks around 6 – 8 weeks and gradually diminishes by the fourth month. Most babies are more settled at night by 12 weeks of age.

Do you know that newborns awaken and feed frequently?

This is because they spend a large portion of their sleep time in “active sleep”, a light sleep state.

Most newborns fall asleep during or immediately after a feed irrespective of whether the feed occurs during the daytime or night-time.

Babies with less developed self-regulation abilities require sensitive handling in order to establish a positive sleep pattern. Babies who find it difficult to still their bodies for sleep may require much more holding (i.e. a firm embrace or wrapping to reduce arm and leg movements, and back arching) than others. In general it has been found that swaddled infants arouse less and sleep longer. The benefits of swaddling are particularly evident for pre-term babies. Swaddling is not recommended when the baby begins to attempt to turn/roll.

When is my Baby Tired?

Body Language

When your baby becomes tensed, frowns and/ clenches his/her fists after being calm and content, he/she is showing tired signs. He/she will progress to grizzle and cry.

Fussing with Feed

You may also notice that your baby is not keen on feeding when he/she is tired. He/she may also disengage from your attempts to have eye contact or chat.

When you see these signs within an hour of baby wake time, it is time to settle your baby.



REM / Non-REM Sleep

70% of young babies sleep is **REM sleep (active sleep)**. This can occur 5-10 minutes after falling asleep. They become very active & restless and their hearing is acute. Dreaming occurs in the latter part of the REM cycle and you may hear young babies cry or grunt and sometimes misinterpreted as being awake. Babies generally will settle again with a bit of gentle patting/rocking and soothing.

The 30 % is **non-REM sleep (deep sleep)**. At this stage, babies breathe very slowly and are usually very still. One cycle of sleep is approximately 60 mins. In that time, babies may need reassurance three to four times or none at all.

This handout was prepared using information from the following sources:

- Adapted from Ngala Secrets of Good Sleepers 2010.



Age	Sleep Range in 24 Hour Period	Comments
0 -3 months	11.8 -20.5 hours	Newborns sleep most of the 24 hour period except when feeding. Can wake every 2-3 hours if breastfed and every 3-5 hours if bottle-fed. Being awake inclusive of feeding is generally about an hour and a half before they need to nap again during the day.