By 6-12 months, you would have noticed that your baby is more alert and is able to stay up longer between sleeps during the day. He/she is able to sleep for longer periods of time and can go longer between feedings. He/she is establishing a new schedule for eating and sleeping. In other words, the circadian rhythm (those natural signals that tell us when to eat and sleep), is now well established.

Babies have shorter sleep cycles than adults and spend more time in light REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. At 6-12 months, their sleep cycle ranges from 40-60 mins as compared to 90 mins in adults.

REM sleep is associated with the processing and storing of information and is linked to memory and learning. It is believed that babies need to spend more time in REM sleep than adults because they are practicing what they have learnt and are wiring the pathways in their brains.

Watch your sleeping baby to learn about their normal activities whilst asleep. Babies who are learning to crawl may often be seen crawling around. Babies who are learning to put things in the mouth may be munching on their fingers while in REM sleep. Babies learning language may be making sounds, saying words or babbling. Babies may even grizzle, grimace and smile in REM sleep. When your baby learns to stand he may pull himself up at the cot side but may not know how to sit down again.

Non-REM deeper sleep is restorative and during Non-REM sleep, which becomes dominant over time, the consolidation of new skills and brain circuitry occurs.

What can parents do?

- Tune in to baby’s tired signs as by 6-12 months, they are very busy and prefer to be doing things instead of sleeping.
- Their memory is also getting consolidated by repetition and will memorise the sequence of events that you repeat everyday. Try and be consistent as this will promote a sense of security with the familiar things that you do.
- They may wake when they are practicing skills during REM sleep, help them to resettle back to sleep if needed.
Reference


