



Putting Your Baby to Bed

Sleeping through the night for newborns means your baby is sleeping six straight hours. She naps throughout the day, sleeping a total of 16 to 20 hours. By the end of her first year, your baby will probably be sleeping 10 to 12 hours at night, with one to two naps during the day. Here are a few tips to get you to the end of that first year.

Sleeping Positions

Some babies prefer certain sleeping positions. Try laying your baby on her back or propping her on one side until you find the right position. Avoid putting her on her stomach. Studies have shown an increase in sudden infant death syndrome in babies placed on their stomachs.

Time for Bed

- Avoid putting anything on the mattress other than a fitted sheet. Newborns don't need pillows, toys or stuffed animals. In fact, these items could possibly smother your baby. Soft foam pads or sheepskin throws are also a smothering hazard to newborns.
- Motion is soothing to babies. A rocking sensation and a loving touch help many babies fall asleep. Because you want to teach your baby how to soothe herself, you may want to rock her until she's almost asleep. She can then be laid in her crib or bassinet to finish falling asleep on her own.
- Some babies want the tops of their heads to touch the bumper, others want nothing around them at all.
- Create a bedtime routine that's different from nap time. Bedtime can involve eating, then bathing, changing into pajamas, reading a book, then rocking. For daytime naps, use a simpler routine: perhaps feeding, then rocking. Pick a routine and stick with it. The familiar is soothing to a baby.
- Familiar surroundings will help your baby at bedtime. Your baby should wake up where he falls asleep to avoid disorientation.
- Heartbeat lullaby tapes have been found to relax babies. The music is coupled with sounds of a mother's heartbeat, a familiar and soothing sound.
- Encourage your older baby to fall asleep on his own. Older babies can safely take a favorite toy, pacifier or blanket to bed.
- Put your baby to bed at night in a darkened room. Use low lighting or dimmer switches.