

Nap Guide



Nap Routine

Babies love consistency and routine. It helps them to understand what is expected of them and signifies what's coming next in their day.

Having a nap routine can be helpful to get babies to sleep. It doesn't need to be long and drawn out, but putting on a clean nappy, drawing the blackout blinds, starting the white noise and a 'sleep well' is all it takes for your baby to know the score. Some people like to add in a quick story or a lullaby. However you decide to do it, make sure it's consistent and you do the same thing every time.

How do I know when my baby needs a nap?

I would always suggest using wake windows as a guide. There is a big onus on wake windows in the sleep world, but, in truth, they will only work for 'the average baby' - and whose baby is average?? So I would suggest shaping the bare bones of your baby's naps around wake windows, but focussing more on when they seem tired. This will generally be around the same time each day so you can quickly identify when they might need a nap. Look out for:

Yawning
Rubbing eyes
Vacant staring
Pulling ears
Fussiness/hyperactivity

Sleep cues can be different from baby to baby, and some don't show any at all until they hit the wall and become fussy, so I would always suggest taking a look at the average wake window - then you will have an idea as to when to look out for those cues in your baby.

I am going to talk about



0 - 6 weeks

Total amount of sleep in 24 hours – 14-17 hours

Average wake window – 45 mins – 1 hour

4-8 naps a day

Average length of naps – 15 mins – 4 hours

Newborn sleep is both unpredictable and unique. We don't recommend trying to shoehorn your baby into a routine at this age. Your baby is still adjusting to life outside of the womb – a period often referred to as the Fourth Trimester.

Your baby will need to feed frequently to keep their little tummy full – when they are hungry will dictate when they wake.

If you're keen to have a little more structure to your day, it can be helpful to follow a EPS routine – that is Eat, Play, Sleep. This can be helpful to make sure your baby is feeding when they're at their most alert and therefore taking a full feed. Babies who “snack” all day long are likely to have shorter bursts of sleep than those who have a good feed when they are alert and go to sleep with a full tummy. This can also help to prevent associations with feeding to sleep further along the line. HOWEVER, you shouldn't worry about routine too much at this stage and the most important thing is that when your baby is hungry, they are fed.



3 - 4 months

Total amount of sleep in 24 hours – 12-15 hours

Average wake window – 1 hour 30 mins – 1 hour 45 mins

3-4 naps a day

Average length of naps – 30 mins – 2 hours

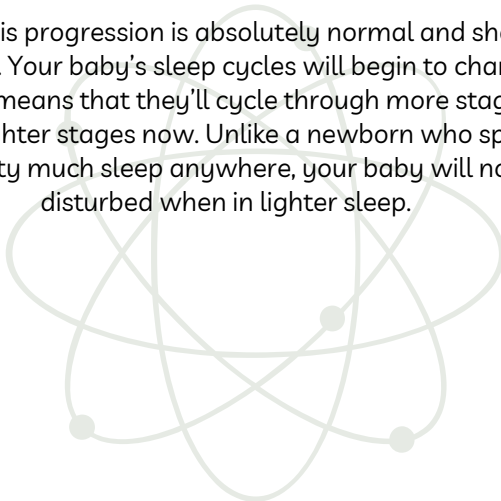
This is a key stage in your baby's sleep development! Here's a bit of sleep science that can be helpful to know:

The Circadian Rhythm is the 24-hour internal clock in our brain that regulates cycles of alertness and sleepiness. There are two hormones that impact your baby's sleep and support these changing rhythms - melatonin (the sleep hormone) and cortisol (the stress and alertness hormone). At 3 months old your baby's day-night rhythms have been established and you will start to see some changes in the way they sleep:

Somewhere between 4 and 6 months you may notice a change in your baby's sleep – this is often referred to as the dreaded **4-6-month sleep regression**.

Don't panic! We prefer to think of it as a progression rather than a regression. It's a period when your baby's sleep is actually maturing, and their sleep patterns are becoming more like adults'. At the same time, they're mastering many new skills and becoming more active.

The good news is that this progression is absolutely normal and shows that your baby's development is on track. Your baby's sleep cycles will begin to change to become more like an adult's. This means that they'll cycle through more stages of sleep and spend more time in lighter stages now. Unlike a newborn who spends more time in deep sleep and can pretty much sleep anywhere, your baby will now be at risk of being disturbed when in lighter sleep.



So how can you survive this?

Well firstly, try to remember that this isn't forever. It's a short phase in time, which WILL get better. Often it's good to have that at the forefront of your brain when you're going through tricky patches of sleep.

Secondly optimise your baby's sleep environment. I'm talking blackout blinds, white noise and a consistent room temperature with appropriate layers.

Be consistent with your bedtime and nap time routines. Don't stray from what your baby knows. Remember this is your way of communicating to your baby that it's time for bed.

Lastly, think about independent sleep. This means your baby taking themselves from awake, to drowsy, to asleep. This is also known as self soothing and can be achieved fairly quickly with some gentle sleep training.



5 – 6 months

5-6 months Total amount of sleep in 24 hours – 12-15 hours

Average wake window – 1 hours 45 mins – 2 hours

3-4 naps a day

Average length of naps – 30 mins – 2 hours

Most babies of this age need 3-4 naps a day. The first two naps should be longer, and the last one or two shorter. We often refer to these later naps as short catnaps, designed to help your baby “get through” to bedtime.

At this age it's a good idea to aim for those two longer naps at home in the cot and get out and about for the shorter naps – perhaps in the pram or car.

7 – 9 months

Total amount of sleep in 24 hours – 12-15 hours

Average wake window – 2 hours 15 mins – 2 hours 45 mins

2-3 naps a day

Average length of naps – 1 – 3 hours

Sleep is often more predictable at this stage of your baby's life and you may find the routine is falling into place. At some time in this period your baby will drop their 3rd nap and move to a 2-nap day. Watch out for:

- Difficulty settling for naps
- Shorter catnaps which were previously longer.
- The last nap of the day getting close to bedtime.
- Early waking

To drop that 3rd nap increase the wake window for your baby by small increments of 15 minutes at a time until they're at the top end of the range.



10-12 months

Total amount of sleep in 24 hours – 12-15 hours
Average wake window – 3 hours – 3 hours 30 mins
2 naps a day
Average length of naps – 1 – 2 hours

At this age your baby will probably be having 2 naps a day. We recommend that these naps are taking place in the cot as often as possible, as these are the most restorative naps.

Around this age you might want to think about a slightly later bedtime. Babies will start to need slightly less sleep as they approach 12 months old, so this might start showing itself through early waking or resisting naps. Although most parents aim for that golden 12 hours a night, more often than not a baby will only need 10 or 11 hours overnight, so bear this in mind when you are working out their bedtime.

12-18 months

Total amount of sleep in 24 hours – 11-14 hours

Average wake window – 3.5 - 4 hours on 2 naps

4-6 hours on 1 nap

1 -2 naps a day

Average length of naps – 1 – 3 hours

At this stage many babies start to show signs of the nap transition from 2 naps to 1 nap.

This transition can be fast and easy for some babies, and can take longer and be more disruptive for others.

Because this varies from baby to baby, here are some of the key things to look out for that may signal your little one is ready to transition:

Early Waking

Refusing morning nap

Refusing lunchtime nap



The wake window is going to change more than at any other time in your baby's sleep transitions. Some babies will just drop it over night, whereas for others it may take a bit longer. you can start by capping the morning nap to 30 minutes or even less. Keep doing that for as long as that works, and then gradually start to push naps back a bit over the course of a few weeks until you're at a point where your baby will comfortably stay awake until lunchtime.

Be prepared for some slightly disjointed naps for a few weeks whilst this transition happens, but please don't worry. Your baby will sleep when they're tired. If you need to tweak bed time a bit temporarily then do so. You will soon establish a routine which works well.

18 months +

Total amount of sleep in 24 hours – 11-14 hours

Average wake window – 5 – 6 hours

1 nap a day

Average length of naps – 1 – 2 hours

From 18 months onwards your little one will be having one long lunchtime nap, typically lasting 1-2 hours.

At the age of 2.5 to 3 years however, they will want to drop that nap entirely and stay awake for 12 hours between wake up and bedtime. Your child will normally signal that it's time to drop their nap by being unsettled at bedtime or resisting their nap.

As a first step, before dropping it entirely, we recommend reducing the length of the daytime nap. Depending on how long your baby normally naps, think about capping it to 30 minutes less. Give that a few days to see if it makes a difference until you drop it entirely.

It's also useful to have some quieter time in the day, at their old nap time, for your child to rest and to stop them from being overstimulated and upset in the afternoon. Some quiet play with puzzles or books is ideal.

Naps can feel quite daunting to navigate, but your baby will adapt well to changes. If you think you might need a bit more support with naps, book a mini call with me by clicking the link below.

Mini Call

The Sleep Sisters

