



Your Guide to Great Day Napping!



Sleep isn't just something parents dream of—it's a critical part of your baby's health and well-being. When your little one sleeps, their body is hard at work, supporting vital growth and development. During deep sleep, babies experience a surge in growth hormones like Human Growth Hormone (HGH), which are key for both brain development and physical growth. This is when your baby's brain is forming important neural connections, consolidating memories, and building the tissues and organs they need to thrive.

But it's not just about physical growth. Sleep also plays a crucial role in supporting your baby's immune system. While they rest, their bodies produce cytokines, proteins that help regulate the immune system and fight off infections. Consistent, restful sleep boosts their ability to fight off illness, helping to protect them from common childhood sicknesses.





In addition to physical health, sleep supports cognitive and emotional development. It helps your baby with learning, memory, and emotional regulation—skills that are vital in these early stages of life. So, when babies aren't getting enough sleep or are waking up frequently through the night, these essential functions can be disrupted. Helping your baby establish a healthy sleep routine isn't just about giving you a break—it's about setting the stage for their overall health, growth, and development.

Why day naps matter



Physical and Mental Development:

Just like nighttime sleep, daytime naps are a crucial part of your baby's overall sleep needs. In fact, naps play a significant role in helping your baby's body and brain grow and develop properly. When your baby takes naps during the day, they get a chance to experience deeper stages of sleep that are essential for physical growth, brain development, and emotional well-being.



Mood Regulation:

Babies who nap well tend to be more content and less fussy throughout the day and they sleep much better at night. Sleep begets sleep!



Improved Night Sleep:

One of the most important reasons naps are essential is to prevent overtiredness. When babies don't nap enough during the day, they can become overtired, which actually makes it harder for them to fall asleep at night. This creates a cycle of poor sleep that can affect their mood, health, and development. By helping your baby establish healthy daytime naps, you're ensuring they're well-rested, calm, and ready for bedtime.





Step 1

Understanding Your Baby's Nap Needs

- Baby's Age and Sleep Needs:
 - Newborns (0-3 months): Newborns typically nap between 4-5 times a day, totalling around 14-18 hours of sleep.
 - Infants (3-6 months): Around 3-4 naps a day, usually totalling 12-15 hours of sleep.
 - Older Babies (6-12 months): 2 naps per day, totalling about 12-14 hours of sleep.
 - Toddlers (1-2 years): 1-2 naps, totalling around 11-14 hours of sleep.
- Important Tip: Every baby is different! Pay attention to your baby's sleep patterns and adjust nap schedules accordingly. You may need to increase awake time or decrease awake time depending on how your baby is responding.

Step 2

Recognising tired signs

Watch for Early Signs of Sleepiness:

Babies give us signals when they're ready to nap, and it's crucial to respond to these early cues. Some common sleep cues include:

- Rubbing eyes or ears
- Yawning
- Becoming fussy or irritable
- Staring off or seeming "spacey"

Why Early Cues Matter:

If you wait too long to put your baby down for a nap, they may become overtired, making it harder for them to fall asleep or stay asleep. Timing is everything and an overtired baby is something you want to avoid!





Step 3

Creating a Nap-Friendly Environment

Optimal Sleep Space:

- **Darkness:** Ensure the room completely dark so blackout curtains to block out daylight can be your best friend here!
- **Sound:** Consider using a white noise machine to drown out background noise, which can help babies fall asleep and stay asleep.
- **Temperature:** Keep the room cool and comfortable, between 18-22 degrees is ideal
- **Comfortable Bedding:** Make sure the cot or bassinet is safe and comfortable, with a firm mattress and no loose blankets or pillows.
- **Establishing a Familiar Nap Setting:**
- Make the nap area similar to the nighttime sleep space, if possible, so your baby can associate the environment with sleep.

Step 4

Building a Consistent Nap Routine

- **Consistency is Key:**
 - Just like nighttime sleep, babies thrive on routine. If you establish a consistent time each day for naps, it helps set expectations for your baby.
 - Set up a simple nap-time ritual (e.g., dim the lights, give a gentle massage, or read a short book). This helps signal to your baby that it's time to wind down and prepares their brain for sleep.
- **Ideal Timing for Naps:**
 - Babies and toddlers often nap best when they're not overtired or under-tired. A good rule of thumb is:
 - For babies younger than 6 months, naps typically happen within 2 hours of waking up.
 - After 6 months, aim for naps to be about 2.5-3 hours after your baby wakes from the previous nap or morning.
- **Example of a Nap Schedule for 7-12-month-old:**
 - Morning wake time: 7:00 AM
 - First nap: 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM
 - Second nap: 1230 PM - 2:30 PM





Step 5

Nap Training Methods

There are a few methods you can use to help your baby nap independently. Below are some gentle nap training techniques:

1. The gradual withdrawal method:

Put your baby in the crib drowsy but awake: Place your baby in their crib while they are sleepy but still awake, so they can learn to self-soothe.

- Sit in a chair next to the crib: Initially, sit in a chair next to the cot to provide comfort and reassurance, without picking up or soothing them directly.
- Gradually move the chair further away: Each night, gradually move the chair a little further from the cot. This allows your baby to gradually learn to fall asleep independently while still feeling your presence.
- Offer verbal reassurance (but no physical contact): If your baby cries or becomes upset, offer calm, soothing words (e.g., "I'm here, it's time to sleep") but avoid picking them up or touching them.
- Increase the waiting time before comforting: If your baby is crying, wait a few minutes before offering reassurance. Gradually increase this time as your baby becomes more comfortable with falling asleep on their own.
- Be patient and consistent: Stick to the plan each night, as consistency helps your baby adjust. It may take a few days to a week for them to get used to this method.
- The Chair Method offers a gradual, comforting way for your baby to learn self-soothing skills while you slowly transition away from providing direct comfort.





Step 5

Nap Training Methods

2. The Ferber Method (Controlled Crying):

1. Put your baby down drowsy but awake: Place your baby in their crib while they're sleepy but still awake, so they can learn to fall asleep on their own.
2. Let your baby cry for increasing intervals: If your baby cries after being put down, let them cry for a short, set amount of time (e.g., 3-5 minutes).
3. Gradually increase the waiting time: After each check-in, increase the amount of time you wait before comforting them. For example:
 - o First check-in: 3 minutes
 - o Second check-in: 5 minutes
 - o Third check-in: 10 minutes, etc.
4. Offer brief reassurance: When you check on your baby, offer comfort, but keep it brief and avoid picking them up. Use a calm voice to reassure them that you're nearby.
5. Stay consistent: Stick to the plan each day. Consistency helps your baby learn to self-soothe and settle back to sleep.
6. Be patient: The Ferber method can take a few days to a week for babies to adjust, so stay consistent, but be flexible if needed.

This method allows babies to learn to self-soothe through a gradual process, while still offering reassurance and comfort.

The Pick Up/Put Down Method:

This is ideal for parents who want an in-room method and don't like to hear their babies crying for long periods of time.

This method involves picking the baby up when they cry, comforting them briefly and quickly, and then putting them back in the cot awake. You repeat this process until they fall asleep, gradually shortening the time spent comforting. This process can take a lot longer than the other more independent sleep training methods.





Step 6

Troubleshooting Common Nap Problems



Nap Refusal:

If your baby refuses to nap, check for signs of overtiredness or hunger. Sometimes, babies just need a bit more help winding down or a change in their sleep environment (remember a dark room and white noise is key).

Short Naps:

Babies often have a tendency to take shorter naps (especially before 6 months). If your baby's naps are consistently too short (less than 30 minutes), you can try extending naps by soothing them back to sleep once they wake up. This may take some time and patience though as it's a real skill for them to master!



Frequent Night Wakings Due to Poor Daytime Naps:

If your baby isn't napping well during the day, they may be overtired by bedtime, causing more frequent night wakings. Focus on improving daytime sleep to improve nighttime sleep. An overtired baby really does struggle to link sleep cycles overnight!





Step 7

Patience and Flexibility

Remember, Every Baby Is Different:

Some babies take longer to adjust to a nap routine than others. Stick with it but be flexible. There will be good days and challenging days, and that's okay and to be expected!

Reevaluate and Adjust:

If you notice that your baby's nap schedule isn't working, feel free to make adjustments. Growth spurts, teething, and developmental milestones can temporarily affect nap patterns, so it's normal for your baby's nap needs to change over time.



Remember,

I am here to help you!

Please get in touch if you would like personalised one on one support with your baby's sleep.

Sophia

