

Infant Sleep

Healthy sleep is important for your baby's growth and development, metabolism and repair, learning, memory and emotional well-being. You can encourage healthy sleeping habits at a young age to help reduce the risk of sleep deprivation and disorders later in life.

SAFE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

Always place your baby in a safe sleep environment. This includes:

- Sharing a room with your baby for the first six months of your baby's life
- Placing your baby on their back to sleep for every sleep. Once your baby can roll you do not need to reposition them
- Putting your baby to sleep on a firm surface covered by a fitted sheet in a crib, cradle or bassinet that meets Canadian Safety Regulations
- Removing all objects (e.g. loose blankets, pillows, bumper pads) from your baby's sleep environment
- Providing a smoke-free environment

INFANT SLEEP CYCLES

Under three months old

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Babies cannot tell the difference between night and day and their sleep patterns are irregular. They spend 60 to 90 minutes in a sleep cycle and more time in light sleep so daytime naps and nighttime waking is normal. They will also wake during the night to feed because of their small stomach capacities.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Watch your baby for cues that may tell you they are tired and sleepy. They may be less alert or active, become quieter, start yawning, closing their fists, or their eyelids may flutter
- Feed baby at night
- Reduce stimulation when you recognize your baby's sleep cues (e.g. speak softly, turn off lights, take baby to their crib)

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-800-361-5653

TTY 1-866-512-6228

york.ca/HealthConnection

Three to six months old

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Babies will start to sleep for longer periods of time and eventually the longest sleep (4 to 5 hours) time will happen at night.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a consistent bedtime routine
- Avoid skipping daytime naps

Six months to one year old

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Babies' patterns will be more regular. They will sleep for longer periods at night

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Maintain bedtime routines and have a bedtime before 9 p.m.
- Create positive sleep associations by observing how your baby falls asleep and repeating those strategies (e.g. dark room, placing baby in their crib, saying good night)
- Avoid exposure to screens (e.g. TV, phone, tablet) in the evening (e.g. after 7 p.m.) and while baby is trying to fall asleep

INFANT SLEEP DISRUPTIONS & SOOTHING STRATEGIES

Sleep can be disrupted or pattern may change for a number of reasons. Your baby may be:

- Sick or not feeling well. If you suspect that an illness is disrupting your baby's sleep contact your health care provider or call Health Connect Ontario at 811
- Experiencing developmental milestones (e.g. teething, growth spurt, starting to crawl)
- Overtired and having difficulty settling down to sleep. Signs that your baby may be overtired include crying, clinging to caregiver, being clumsy, being fussy over food, becoming bored with toys or demanding attention

There are a variety of strategies to comfort an unsettled baby which could help them settle to sleep. It is important to keep in mind that strategies work sometimes but no strategy works all of the time. Some strategies may even stimulate your baby. Try a variety of soothing strategies:

Repeating/rhythms

- Sing a lullaby with repeating verses
- Walk rhythmically
- Gently rock your baby

Multiple sensations

- Read a picture book to your baby (sight, sound, touch)
- Give your baby a bath or massage

White noise

- Turn on a vacuum, fan or sound machine

Closeness

- Hold baby skin-to-skin
- Feed the baby
- Maintain eye contact
- Talk to the infant
- Make funny faces or sounds

Changing positions

- Pick your baby up
- Carry your baby (in arms or a sling that meets safety standards)

Contact us to learn more and connect with a nurse

Call York Region Health Connection
1-800-361-5653, TTY: 1-866-512-6228 or visit york.ca/NurseChat

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