

## PREVENTION OF SLEEP PROBLEMS – NEWBORN

Parents want their children to go to bed without resistance and to sleep through the night. They look forward to a time when they can again have seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep. Newborns, however, have a limit to how many hours they can sleep (usually four to five hours). By two months of age, some 50% of infants can sleep through the night. By four months, most infants have acquired this capacity. It may not develop, however, unless you have a plan. Consider the guidelines below if you want to teach your baby that nighttime is a special time for sleeping, that her/his crib is where she/he stays at night, and that she/he can put him/herself back to sleep. It is far easier to prevent sleep problems before six months of age than it is to treat them later.

### NEWBORNS

1. Place your baby in the crib when he/she is drowsy but awake. This step is very important. Without it, the other preventive measures will fail. Your baby's last waking memory should be of the crib, not of you or of being fed. He/she must learn to put him/herself to sleep without you. Don't expect him/her to go to sleep as soon as you lay him/her down. If he/she is crying, rock him/her and cuddle him/her; but when he/she settles down, try to place him/her in the crib before he/she falls asleep. Handle naps in the same way. This is how your child will learn to put himself back to sleep after normal awakenings. Don't help your infant when he /she doesn't need any help.
2. Hold your baby when fussy during the first three months. All new babies cry some during the day and night. If your baby cries excessively, the cause is probably colic. Always respond to a crying baby. Gentle rocking and cuddling seem to help the most. Babies can't be spoiled during the first three or four months of life, but even colicky babies have a few times each day when they are drowsy and not crying. On these occasions, place the baby in the crib and let the baby learn to self-comfort and self-induce sleep.
3. Carry your baby for at least three hours each day when he/she isn't crying. This practice will reduce the fussy cycle.
4. Do not let your baby sleep for more than three consecutive hours during the day. Attempt to awaken him/her gently and entertain him/her. In this way, the time when your infant sleeps the longest will occur during the night (Note: Many newborns can sleep five consecutive hours and you can teach your baby to take this longer period of sleep at night).
5. Keep daytime feeding intervals to at least two hours for newborns. More frequent daytime feedings (such as hourly) lead to frequent awakenings for small feedings at night. Crying is the only form of communication newborns have. Crying does not always mean your baby is hungry. The infant may be tired, bored, lonely, or too hot. Hold your baby at these times or put him/her to bed. Don't let feeding become a pacifier. For every time you nurse your baby, there should be four or five times that you snuggle the infant without nursing. Don't let him/her get into the bad habit of eating every time you hold him/her. That's called "grazing".

6. Make middle of the night feedings brief and boring. You want your baby to think of nighttime as a special time for sleeping. When he/she awakens at night for feedings, don't turn on the lights, talk to him/her or rock him/her. Feed the baby quickly and quietly. Provide extra rocking and playtime during the day. This approach will lead to longer periods of sleep at night.
7. Don't awaken your infant to change diapers during the night. The exceptions to this rule are soiled diapers or times when you are treating a bad diaper rash. If you must change your child, use as little light as possible, do it quickly and don't provide any entertainment.
8. Don't let your baby sleep in your bed. Once your baby is used to sleeping with you, a move to his/her own bed will be extremely difficult. So why not teach your child to prefer his/her own bed? For the first four to five months, you can keep your baby in a crib next to your bed.
9. Give the last feeding at your bedtime (10 or 11p.m.). Try to keep the baby awake for the last two hours before this last feeding. Going to bed at the same time every night helps your baby develop good sleeping habits.