



TIPS

Tips for Infant & Parent Sleep



**A Guide to Help
Manage Sleep
for
Parents and
Newborns**

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Sleep is important for overall health – for parents and babies! We know that sleeping well helps you and your baby be at your best.

When you get the sleep you need you are better able to handle the events of your day –emotional ups and downs are easier to take, you will have more energy and feel better physically, and your brain will work better and faster.

The tips in this booklet will help you and your baby get the best sleep possible over the next few months.

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Things to Know About Sleep & Being a Parent

★ **It is difficult to have interrupted sleep while you are learning to be a new parent.**

- It is tough to be a new parent and it is tough to do anything without sleep. As a result you might not feel as well, you might not cope as well, and multi-tasking might be more difficult than it was before. Try not to be too hard on yourself. Things are different now with a new baby and it is expected that for a few weeks you won't be functioning like you used to.
- Many parents find the lack of sleep in the first months to be a very challenging part of being a new parent.
- Sleep is one of life's basic necessities, so when we lack sleep it has an effect on every part of our lives – mental, physical and emotional!
- Try the strategies in this booklet to help with your sleep and your baby's sleep.



★ **Learning how to care for your new baby can be overwhelming.**

- Each baby is unique and it takes time to get to know one another.
- With time your baby and you will learn about each other and caring for your baby will come more easily.
- Just like learning anything new, figuring out how to take care of your baby takes time and you will have both good days and not-so-good days.
- Figuring out how to get your baby to sleep well takes some time, but the tips in this booklet will help you get there.

Things to Know About How Babies Sleep

★ **Every baby is different.**

- Your baby's sleep habits are uniquely her own – they will be different from your sister's baby, from your neighbour's baby, and from your own sleep habits when you were a baby.
- Over time you will learn to recognize your baby's patterns and signals that she is sleepy - the first few weeks are a time of getting to know one another.



★ How much should my baby sleep and when?

- You've already noticed -newborns don't have a regular sleep pattern in the first few weeks! Newborns will sleep in 2-4 hour chunks and then will spend 1-2 hours awake before they are ready to sleep again.
- Newborns sleep about 16 hours a day; some babies will sleep a couple of hours more or a couple of hours less than this average because every baby is different. At first your baby's sleep will be distributed throughout a 24-hour day.
- As babies get older they have fewer, but longer sleep periods and more time is spent asleep at night, so don't lose hope! Use the tips in this booklet to start good sleep habits -the first 6 weeks or so are challenging and things usually settle down a bit more from there.

★ Sleepy? Hungry? Wet? Overstimulated? How do you know?!

- It can be frustrating to figure out what your baby wants. Give yourself time to learn what all your baby's actions and moods mean –eventually you'll come to know your baby's signals.
- There are early signs that babies send to let us know they are tired:
 - Some babies stare off into space when they are ready for bed –they are “zoning out”.



- Some babies will turn away from you when you try and play with them or distract them when they are fussing –this too is a sign they might be ready for some sleep.
- Sometimes babies get fussy or cry when they are tired and overstimulated. It is their way of communicating to us that they need a break.
- Some later signs that a baby is really tired and ready for bed:
 - If your baby is crying even though he has recently had a good feed, a burp and a diaper change, he may be trying to tell you he needs to sleep, especially if it has been an hour or two since his last sleep time.
 - If your baby is arching his back, turning away from you, and crying even more when you try to console him, he may need to be settled for sleep.

★ **Some babies do, some babies don't.**

- Some babies may need to be rocked or fed to help them go to sleep in the first few weeks of life. Some babies will settle on their own or can fall asleep on their own if they are put down to sleep while still awake but drowsy. If your baby can do this, it gives your baby a chance to practice falling asleep on her own and it may prevent you needing to always rock or feed your baby to sleep later on. Some babies get used to having their parent help them get to sleep and rely on them being there each time.
- Babies (and adults too!) are very aware of what is around them when they fall asleep. During the night (or the day during naps), babies have brief awakenings that allow them to check for changes in their environment and they will wake up fully, if something is quite different.
 - A baby who fell asleep being rocked or fed by her mother and wakes up on her own in her crib will probably cry out for her mother to come back in and do those familiar things that will help her go back to sleep again (we call this a Sleep Association).
 - Parents may use many strategies to get their baby to sleep such as jiggling, dancing, driving in the car, swinging in a swing, walking in stroller, baby carrier or sling, sleeping with the baby on their chest,



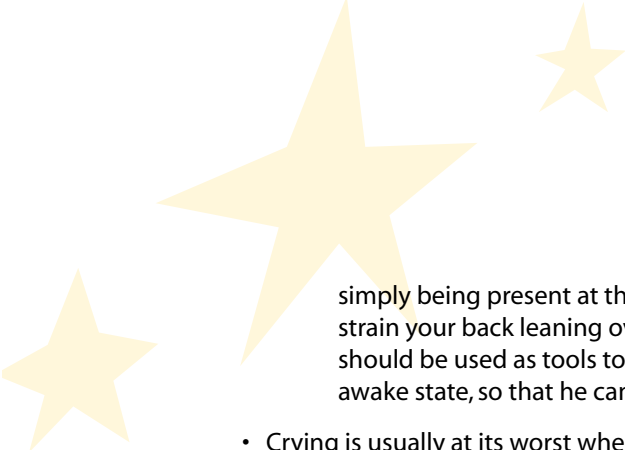
etc. Of course, many of these strategies come naturally to parents and can be very helpful in settling a baby down to sleep. However, if the baby is helped to fall asleep in the same way every time, eventually the baby will need that exact type of help every time she wakes up, in order to fall back asleep –even in the middle of the night and for naps.

- If your baby still needs help to get to sleep at this early age, don't worry, there's lots of time for her to learn to settle herself as she grows. See the next section of this booklet for some strategies to help your baby settle into a "drowsy but awake" state. Babies need their parents' help and support as they learn to soothe themselves to sleep; the tips in this booklet will help your family start this process.
- Consistency in how you deal with sleep in order to avoid sleep associations will become more important as your baby gets older, especially after the first 6 weeks. Remember, the most important thing is to:
 - Keep trying to take the opportunity to put your baby down drowsy but awake any chance you get. When your baby is settled, but you see her starting to drift off, place her where she usually sleeps and give her a chance to experience that she is safe and can fall asleep.

★ Settling down.

- Crying is often a late sign of tiredness. If your baby is really worked up and crying hard you may need to use some "active" settling strategies such as:
 - Rocking, swinging, holding the baby upright and up at your shoulder so you can make a "Shh-hhhhh" sound right in his ear, swaddling, holding him over your arm so that his belly is supported, etc –every parent figures out their favourite tricks! These more active strategies are good ways to settle a baby down from frantic crying, but try to avoid using them to get a baby to fall asleep every time you put him down.
- Once you have the baby settled down a bit, or if you are dealing with a baby who is just a little fussy, as opposed to actively crying, you might be able to use some less active calming strategies such as:
 - Talking calmly to your baby (e.g. telling him how much you love him and that it is bedtime and you'll see him when he wakes up), singing a soft lullaby, gently rubbing or patting his belly, stroking his head,






simply being present at the bedside (sit down in a chair so you don't strain your back leaning over the crib). Again, don't forget that these should be used as tools to help settle your baby into a drowsy but awake state, so that he can experience falling asleep on his own.

- Crying is usually at its worst when babies are about 6 weeks of age and it gets progressively better from there.
 - A little bit of fussing and crying are not bad for your baby -only long periods of being left to cry can do harm.
 - Excessive crying or "colic" is actually not as common as parents think. In order for a baby to be diagnosed with colic the baby must spend at least three hours a day crying, on at least three days a week, for at least three weeks in a row.
 - If your baby does cry a great deal, it can be heartbreaking and difficult to cope. Please remember -if your baby is difficult to calm down, it doesn't mean you're a bad parent! We don't know much about the causes of excessive crying, but we do know that babies who have colic do not have any more problems with their development or intelligence than babies who cry very little. If you suspect your baby has colic ask your doctor or nurse about it and make sure to get some breaks for yourself during the day.



 **Babies wake up briefly during their sleep cycles – but you might not notice it!**

- During their chunks of sleep babies have very brief (1-5 minute) awakenings –you may or may not notice that your baby wakes up for these "mini-awakes". Adults have these awakenings during the night too, but they are so brief that we don't remember them in the morning. These "mini-wakes" are just a way of checking out our sleeping environment to make sure everything is safe around us and then we can quickly go back to sleep again.
- Because babies have these "mini-awakes" you don't need to rush to your baby each time you hear her stir, make a noise or cry out. Wait first to see if it is a "mini-awake". If your baby is having a "mini-awake" and she is able to settle back to sleep on her own, you are giving her the chance to practice getting back to sleep on her own –and you have just bought yourself some extra sleep time!
- If it hasn't been long since your baby's last feed or diaper change, see what happens if you wait a minute or two before you attend to your baby's

fussing. You may just need to readjust your baby's position or swaddling to help her back to sleep, so both of you have only a "mini-awake". Maybe it will take some comforting with your voice, or a few gentle pats to get her back to sleep – see if you can settle her "from a distance".

- It's important not to let your baby cry too long at this early stage though – in the first 12 weeks of your baby's life, a couple of minutes of fussing is enough to see if she'll settle on her own. After a couple of minutes it's time to go back to your baby and try something else!

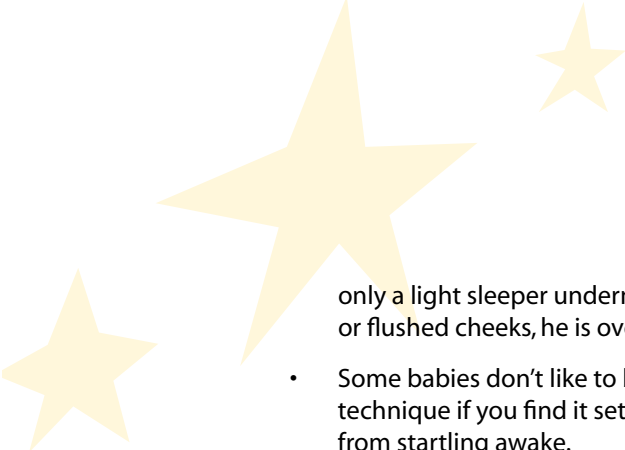
★ **Babies are busy while they sleep.**

- Babies have periods of active and quiet sleep. In active sleep (which is like our dreaming sleep), babies move around, twitch, jerk, startle and breathe in an irregular way.
- You'll notice that your baby might sigh, suck, snuffle, moan, groan, smile, and have periods of fast breathing – all this activity is normal. Although it may not look like it to us adults, your baby is getting good quality sleep.
- If you find your baby startles himself awake in this active sleep period you might want to swaddle him with a blanket to prevent this.



- To swaddle your baby: Spread out a receiving blanket in a diamond shape and fold the top corner down. Lay your baby on top, with his neck at the fold. Bring one top corner of the blanket down and across his body (keep his hands flexed up near the centre of his body) and tuck it under him. Fold the bottom corner of the blanket up along the centre of his body and tuck it in under his chin. Now fold the other top corner down and across his body and pull it snugly around him so that you can wrap it all the way around him. Notice that your baby's legs and arms can still flex and move, but he is supported in the blanket. Keep practicing and ask your postpartum nurse to show you again if you feel you need some more practice or advice.
- Remember that having loose blankets around a sleeping baby is dangerous, so remove the blanket or don't swaddle if your baby always comes undone.
- Babies should not get overheated while they are sleeping, so be sure to use a light blanket (like a receiving blanket) for swaddling with






only a light sleeper underneath. If your baby is sweaty, has damp hair or flushed cheeks, he is overheated.


- Some babies don't like to be swaddled and that's okay; only use this technique if you find it settles your baby or helps prevent your baby from startling awake.
- Don't forget, your baby should always be placed on his back to sleep -this is true when swaddled, too.



Clearing up some common misbeliefs about babies' sleep.

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- Babies are not born "good" or "bad" sleepers –every baby has the potential to learn healthy sleep habits with their parents' help. The tips in this booklet focus on things that you can do to help your baby with her sleep as she grows in the first few months.
 - Babies will not simply fall asleep when they are tired –they need their parents to give help, comfort, support, and a good sleep environment so that they can learn how to settle down and fall asleep.
 - Some babies cry when they wake up in their crib or wherever they are put down to sleep. Some parents think that this means the baby doesn't like the location for sleep, but this is not necessarily true. For example, if your baby is held or rocked to sleep and then placed in her crib when she is sound asleep, she will cry out when she wakes up. This is because she doesn't know where she is, not because she doesn't like the crib. If you plan on letting your baby sleep in a crib try to capture the opportunity to let her fall asleep in it. This will allow her to become familiar with the crib, and when she wakes up in her crib she will feel safe.
 - Keeping your baby up late or denying her naps during the day will not lead to better or longer sleep at night. This will result in an overtired baby who has difficulty falling asleep. Nighttime for babies is longer than for adults (somewhere between 7pm to 7am), so settling your baby, winding down for sleep and keeping stimulation to a minimum starts much earlier at night for a baby than an adult.

Tips to Help Your Baby Learn the Difference between Night & Day



Try to expose your baby to some natural outdoor light in the morning or early afternoon.

- We all have an "internal clock" that takes in light from around us. This clock is set by the amount of light we see and the clock sends signals to our body that we should be more alert in the daytime and sleepier at night.

- This means that your baby’s room doesn’t need to be dark for him to sleep during the day. If you leave some natural light in your baby’s room during the day, this will tell him (and his internal clock) that it is daytime.
- You don’t need to keep your home too quiet during the day either. If you make regular noises in the day, he will learn to associate those sounds with daytime and quiet with nighttime.
- Keep in mind that a baby’s nighttime starts much earlier than an adult’s nighttime – at about 7pm or so.

★ **Avoid exposing your baby to the TV, especially in the evening.**

- Videos, DVD and television shows (even those designed for infants) may have an alerting effect on infants’ brains since they act like a light source, sending the message to “wake up”. Babies who watch TV get less sleep than babies who don’t watch TV – this may be because these programs are over-stimulating.



★ **You and your baby might enjoy beginning a short bedtime routine.**

- This routine is a 15 to 30 minute series of predictable events that will help your baby unwind and to let her know that sleep is coming.
- It doesn’t really matter what you choose to do in your routine, as long as it is aimed at slowing things down. Your routine might include a bath, a massage, rocking in a chair and reading a book, cuddling and singing a song, or whatever else you might enjoy doing with your baby.
- What does matter is that you do the same things every night in exactly the same order and same place as where your baby sleeps.
- Some families don’t think of starting a bedtime routine so early in their baby’s life, but it can actually help to separate day from night for your baby and begin to make a difference in her sleep.
- Your baby won’t be so predictable that you can begin your routine at the same time every night, but you can do your routine sometime in the early evening at around the same time. Later on when your baby’s schedule is more reliable, you’ll have taken the first steps to making bedtime an enjoyable time for you and your baby.



★ Bright lights can disrupt your nighttime sleep and your baby's nighttime sleep.

- When you care for your baby at night, turn on a night light or use a dimmer switch instead of other bright lights.
- Keep the supplies (e.g. diapers, baby wipes) you'll need at night near the baby so you don't have to turn any lights on. Having the things that you need nearby will also limit the time you spend awake caring for your baby at night.

★ Limit the social interaction and play you have with your baby at night.

- When your baby wakes up at night, feed him and change his diaper as needed, but talk to him calmly and quietly, and don't play too much or overstimulate him.
- This quiet approach to nighttime will encourage him to go back to sleep sooner as it gives him the message "Nighttime is for sleeping." Of course, you can have lots of playtime during the day.



Sleep & Feeding

★ Waking your baby to feed.

- In the first couple of weeks with your newborn her feeding schedule is still being established and you will probably need to remind your baby that it is time to eat. In these early days it is okay to wake your baby for feeds. However, if you are breastfeeding, this will eventually no longer be necessary at night once your milk supply has increased (usually after the first two weeks or so) and you and your baby have the hang of breastfeeding.
- Once your baby is feeding well and gaining weight appropriately (ask your doctor or nurse if your baby has gained the right amount of weight in the first few weeks) you will not need to wake her up at night for feeds. So, if your baby sleeps for a longer stretch at night once in a while (more than 3 hours for a breastfed baby, and more than 4 hours for a bottle-fed baby) –let her sleep and you will get some extra sleep too!
- Waking your baby to feed more frequently during the day can help with her sleep at night. If she learns to feed more often during the day then she will be more likely to sleep for longer periods during the night. Your baby's

intake over a 24-hour period is the most important thing to look for. So, if your breastfeeding newborn is feeding 8-10 times in a 24-hour period and has 6-8 wet diapers a day and regular bowel movements, she is getting enough. If your baby is bottle fed she should be feeding 6-8 times in a 24-hour period with 6-8 wet diapers a day and regular bowel movements.

- If your baby is gaining weight and feeding well, then you can begin to let her sleep longer at night, but continue to wake her if she is sleeping long stretches during the day. Ideally, we would like the baby's longest stretches of sleep to occur during the night! So, if during the day, you notice your baby has been asleep for a long stretch of time, try to gently wake her and see if she is willing to take a feeding. By limiting long stretches of sleep (more than 3-4 hours) in the day you will hopefully encourage longer stretches of sleep at night.

★ **Cluster feeding.**

- All babies have growth spurts. It is normal for your baby to feed more during these growth spurts. This increase in feeding is known as "cluster feeding" and, if he is breastfeeding, this extra feeding stimulates an increase in milk production to meet his growing needs. If your baby is bottle feeding cluster feeding may indicate a need to increase the amount of formula in each bottle to help your baby grow.
- Cluster feedings last around 24 to 48 hours. Once the breastmilk supply increases, or the amount in his bottles increases, your baby will return to a more regular feeding pattern.
- Growth spurts and cluster feedings often occur at around 10 days, 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months and 4-6 months of age.

★ **Snacking.**

- Snacking occurs when your baby feeds a little bit, has a brief sleep, and then feeds again. Snacking results in little chunks of sleep for mother and baby and can also lead to:
 - A gassy baby. The beginning of milk flow is called the foremilk. It is mainly made up of lactose. The milk after that is called hindmilk and contains more fat. Allowing your baby to snack will only provide her with foremilk. This can cause her to be very gassy.
 - Sleep association. This means that your baby will learn to relate sleeping with feeding. Eventually she will fall into the habit of needing to be fed in order to fall asleep.
- Instead of snacking, try to make feeding times a bit longer (see the next tip, below) and more efficient. Longer feeds will allow your baby to get more



hindmilk. The fat in hindmilk will decrease her gassiness and keep her satisfied longer before the next feed.

- Also, try offering one breast for the “main course” and the other for “dessert”. This is another way to ensure that her feedings include more hindmilk – she will feed a longer time on the first breast and will likely drink the hindmilk from that breast. If she is still hungry she can finish off with the other side. Just remember to offer her the side that she finished on at the beginning of the next feed.

★ **Falling asleep at the breast.**

- Try to avoid letting your baby fall sound asleep during feedings – this can lead him to take in only small amounts at each feed and he may begin to associate falling asleep with being fed. As a result he might wake up frequently since he is only “snacking” and he may begin to rely on being fed as the only way he knows how to get to sleep.



- Keep him stimulated during feeds by:
 - Playing with his feet and toes.
 - Talking to him and making eye contact.
 - Feeding him while he is undressed. The air on his skin and contact with your skin will keep him alert.
- If you find that your baby is beginning to dose off during a feed, try changing his diaper or clothes in the middle of the feed in order to stimulate him.
- You can also introduce an activity after his feed to break the association between feeding and sleeping. Think of his schedule as Sleep, Eat, Activity (diaper change or change of clothes, reading a story, singing a song, etc), Sleep, Eat, Activity, repeat....

Last Tips for Baby’s Sleep

★ **Be on the same page with your partner and other caregivers.**

- Discuss these ideas for better sleep with your partner and any other people that care for your baby so that your baby is getting the same messages from each of you and so that you are able to support one another. Being consistent with your baby’s sleep will make the tips in this booklet more effective.

★ **Don't despair. There will be times when your baby doesn't sleep well.**

- When your baby is sick, off her routine, or traveling it might put her off track with sleep.
- Do what you need to do to help her through these temporary bumps, then come right back to the nice sleep foundation you've laid out for her.

Tips to Help with Your Sleep

★ **Make sleep a priority for your whole family.**

- Put sleep ahead of other things that can wait (especially laundry, dishes, dusting, etc).
- Allow yourself enough time in bed for sleep. Consider going to bed earlier or sleeping in later than you usually would.
 - Don't feel badly about wanting more sleep for yourself – if you are an “early to bed” person go to bed when the baby does in the evening, even if this means going to bed earlier than you normally would have in your “life before baby”. For example, if you put the baby down to sleep at 8pm, take the opportunity to go to bed early yourself. If your natural sleep habits make you a “sleeping in” person, then don't hesitate to go back to bed when the baby does after an early morning feed. For example, if you feed the baby at 6am and he is back asleep at 7am, then feel free to catch another couple of hours sleep for yourself.
 - There is no rule saying that your day has to start and end at a certain time, and this will help you get the extra sleep you need to help you cope with your busy day with a new baby.

★ **Your bedroom should be cool, quiet, and dark when you are trying to sleep at night.**

- Too much noise, being overheated (the ideal temperature for your bedroom is 65-72°F or 18-22 °C) or too much light can interfere with your sleep.

★ **Turn down the volume.**

- If you find yourself disturbed by the normal sounds your baby makes during her sleep and you are using a baby monitor, you may want to turn down the volume a little – enough so you can hear your baby cry out, but not enough that you hear every sigh and coo your baby makes.
- If your baby's noises during sleep are bothering you and she sleeps in a crib



or bassinet in your room, try putting her to sleep with her head further away from the head of your bed to decrease the sound a little.

★ Turn off the TV, computer and radio.

- Falling asleep with the TV or radio on can be disruptive to your sleep. Turning them off before going to sleep will prevent you from having to wake up and turn them off later.
- Watching TV or working on the computer before bed can make falling asleep more difficult. This is because both the TV and the computer are light sources that send a “wake-up” signal to your brain. Try to save those activities for earlier in the day.

★ Try relaxing activities before bed.

- It might help you get ready to sleep if you soak in a bath, or listen to soothing music before bed – do whatever works for you – or try the Deep Breathing or Progressive Muscle Relaxation techniques later in this booklet.

★ Put your worries on hold.

- Try to set aside activities that get you thinking for another time. For example, some couples discuss important issues at the end of the day – could you do this earlier?
- Some women find their mind racing at the end of the day, going over the day’s events – try writing your worries down and dealing with them at a time when you’re not trying to sleep.

★ Try to change your negative thoughts about sleep.

- If you worry about sleep, are anxious before bed, or are convinced that you must get a certain amount of sleep in order to function; then you are having negative sleep thoughts that may make your sleep worse.
- Your regular sleep schedule will change to fit the schedule of your new baby, so especially in the first few months you will not be able to get same sleep at night that you used to. However, as the weeks with your new baby go by your sleep and your baby’s sleep



will become more regular and the tips in this booklet should help.



- If negative thoughts about sleep are getting in your way, switch your thinking around to more positive thoughts such as:
 - “As long as I get some sleep I will function fine for the day.”
 - “I’m probably getting more sleep than I think I’m getting.”
- Becoming a parent is a stressful time and negative automatic thoughts are quick, unconscious thoughts that can make the problem worse than it is. These thoughts are inaccurate and distorted, for example: “I’m never going to get a good night’s sleep again!” or “My baby will never sleep well!”
- If you find yourself having such thoughts, the first thing to do is to try to STOP your negative thoughts. Realize that you are having a negative and irrational thought.
- Then, try to RELAX. Take a few deep breaths and relax your muscles to prevent negative emotions (take a look at the relaxation techniques later in the booklet).
- Lastly, try to REFRAVE the thought by asking yourself these questions:
 1. Is this thought really true or am I just jumping to conclusions?
 2. Is there anything positive about the situation?
 3. Am I using words like never, always, worst, or horrible to describe the situation?
- Allow yourself to have more realistic and helpful thoughts about the situation.
- For example: One night you can’t get the baby back to sleep and you think “My baby is never going to be a good sleeper!” STOP, and realize that this is a negative thought. RELAX by taking a few deep, slow, relaxing breaths. REFRAVE your thoughts – it is simply too early to say that your baby is not a good sleeper. In these early days you and your baby will have good nights and bad nights, but it is not true that your baby will never be a good sleeper. You and your baby are making good progress toward developing good sleep habits, and you are already learning things like how to recognize when she is sleepy.





★ **Try to avoid watching the clock.**

- Keeping a close eye on the clock at night can prevent you from falling asleep. Turn the clock away from you so that you're not constantly watching it from your bed.
- Try to avoid thinking about how much time you have left to sleep before the baby wakes or what time you have to get up. Instead, try to clear your mind and relax so that you can fall asleep.



★ **What you eat and drink (and smoke) affects your sleep.**

- Try to consume less or no caffeine – foods and drinks (e.g. coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) containing caffeine can disturb your sleep at night. Especially try to avoid caffeine after lunchtime. Even if you are able to fall asleep, too much caffeine during the day can lead to more frequent awakenings at night.
- A heavy meal close to bedtime might interfere with your sleep because your body will be busy digesting! A light snack before bed might help you sleep if you are hungry at night.
- Avoiding alcohol and cigarettes before going to bed will also improve your sleep. Alcohol might make you fall asleep faster, but you won't sleep as well. Nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant, so smoking before bed can keep you awake. There is also some research to suggest that when women smoke cigarettes this can be disturbing to their infant's sleep – another reason to avoid smoking, especially in the evening.



★ **Exercise regularly.**

- If you are able to exercise outside, before mid-afternoon, the exposure to outside light will help set your “internal clock” and might improve your and your baby’s nighttime sleep.
- Exercise – indoors or outdoors – is a good stress-reliever and helps you sleep better. Once you feel up to it after the delivery of your baby, mild to moderate exercise (e.g. a brisk walk) is enough – overtraining or exercising too much is not recommended and can contribute to feeling tired.

★ Try a bath or a shower.

- A hot bath or shower may relax you and make it easier for you to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- It is best to take the bath or shower about 30-60 minutes before bedtime because your body temperature drops quickly making it easier to fall asleep during that time.

★ Take your medication for pain.

- Pain can affect how well you sleep. Many women experience pain in the first week or two after having a baby and are given medication for pain relief. Taking your pain medication will help you to feel more comfortable and therefore get a better sleep.
- Most pain medications are safe to take while breast-feeding. Ask your nurse or doctor if you are uncertain about the safety of any medications.

★ Try to reserve your bed for sleep.

- Activities such as watching television and staring at a computer screen keep your brain active and expose you to a bright light source in the evening when you should be winding down.
- Sleep habits like watching TV or surfing the internet can be hard to break, but try and limit your bedroom activities to sleeping and sex!

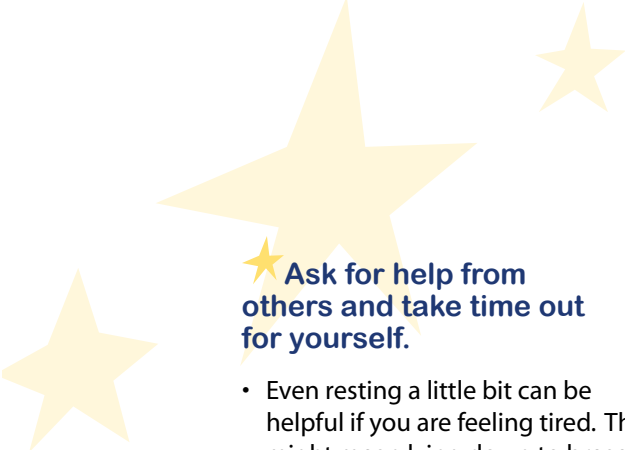
★ Take a nap when your baby does.

- It's tempting to use the time while your baby is asleep to get other things done, but getting more sleep might help you cope better – emotionally and physically – in the first few months.
- If you find it hard to sleep during the day while your baby sleeps, use the time just to relax. You could try the Deep Breathing or Progressive Muscle Relaxation techniques we've suggested or treat yourself to one of your favourite activities.

★ Be realistic about what needs to be done.

- Try to prioritize and scale-down your list of things that "have" to be done. For example, you need to eat dinner, but it doesn't have to be a home-cooked gourmet meal. You need to throw the garbage out when it piles up, but your kitchen appliances don't need to be sparkling.





★ **Ask for help from others and take time out for yourself.**

- Even resting a little bit can be helpful if you are feeling tired. This might mean lying down to breast-feed your baby, or taking some time out to be good to yourself.
- Do you have a friend, neighbor or relative that might come over and watch the baby while you have a nap, go for a leisurely walk or just put your feet up and read a magazine?
- Help with daytime activities such as grocery shopping, cooking, laundry or cleaning can help you to feel more on top of things. If someone wants to come and visit the baby, don't hesitate to ask them if they could pick up milk and bread and diapers (or whatever you need) on the way over. Most people really want to help out at this time, but might not be sure what you need.
- Support from friends and family is extremely important at this time. Having people around you to share feelings, cope with stress, solve problems together, and reframe negative thoughts will help you take care of yourself.

★ **Limit the number of visitors you have.**

- A new baby is exciting for everyone. Friends and family will be eager to visit you and your new baby once you have arrived home from the hospital.
- Visitors can also take up a lot of your time. It is okay to let them know that you need some time alone to rest, especially in the first few weeks at home.
- Try arranging "visiting hours" for your friends and family so that a set amount of time is put aside for guests. The rest of your time should be for you and for your baby!



★ **Feeling stressed out, anxious or worried? Try a relaxation technique!**

- Do you find it difficult to relax when you have a few minutes to yourself?
- Are you feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of caring for your baby?
- Do you go over your day while trying to get to sleep?
- You are not alone - these are very common feelings for new mothers. Maybe you should try a relaxation technique. Relaxation techniques such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation or Deep Breathing – see the next pages for how to do these – can help with physical and mental relaxation at any time and can help you wind down when you want to fall asleep. If there are things that have helped you relax in the past – going for a walk, doing yoga, meditation, writing your worries down in a journal to deal with at another time, etc – then try using those as well.

Deep Breathing

★ **What is deep breathing? How does it work as a relaxation technique?**

- Breathing slowly and deeply is a great relaxation technique. Most of the time we breathe using only the muscles of our upper chest; this is especially true when we are overwhelmed or feeling stressed out. This technique teaches you to breathe from your diaphragm, which is why this technique is also called diaphragmatic breathing.
- The diaphragm is a dome-shaped structure that assists in breathing. When we breathe fully and deeply, the diaphragm moves downward toward our belly as we inhale and upward toward our chest as we exhale. The more the diaphragm can move, the more our lungs are able to expand, which means that more oxygen can be taken in and more carbon dioxide is released with each breath. Breathing from your diaphragm promotes deep breathing and relaxation.



★ How to do deep breathing.

- Lie down on your back on the floor, your bed or another firm surface. It might help you to focus on your breathing if you are resting with your eyes closed.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your stomach. Don't change the way you are breathing for a few breaths –just notice how much or how little each hand moves when you breathe.
- Now try to breathe from your diaphragm – you'll need to take deeper, slower breaths and you should feel your stomach rise and fall. It might help you to think of this as “belly breathing” or that your belly is like a balloon. Imagine air filling up your belly as you inhale, and as you exhale your belly gets smaller. As your breathing gets deeper, you might also be able to deepen your breathing into your chest and feel expansion and relaxation in both your belly and your chest.
- Continue doing this for a few minutes to get the feel of it. Focus on keeping an even, slow and steady pace to your breathing. Some people find it useful to count to 4 when they breathe in and count to 6 as they breathe out. This helps slow your breathing down and gives you something to focus on if your mind is wandering. Other people like to say ‘inhale’ and ‘exhale’ to themselves. Or you could repeat a word that tells you how you'd like to feel. Some people use ‘peace’ or ‘calm’ – choose whatever works for you. Don't worry if your thoughts drift back to making a grocery list or wondering about the baby. Just push those thoughts gently aside and go back to focusing on your breathing for as long as you like.
- When this deep breathing technique comes more easily to you, it is something that you can also practice in a sitting or a standing position. Use your hands on your belly and chest to get the hang of it, and once you are comfortable, you won't need to use them anymore.
- One of the great things about this technique is that you can do it anywhere! No one will notice as you try to relax yourself with deep breathing. Deep breathing will send messages to your body to calm down. It will change your body's reaction to stress – something every new mother needs.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

★ What is progressive muscle relaxation?

- Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) helps to relax you by allowing you to identify and release tension in your body. We often don't notice how much we tense up our muscles under times of stress or when we are upset. In PMR each muscle is tensed and then relaxed so that you can really notice the tension you have in your body so that you can then let it go.
- This technique takes a bit of practice but once you get the hang of it you can perform this relaxation technique anytime, anywhere. You may notice that at first you have trouble tensing just one muscle group. For example, you might tense all the muscles in your arm not just your hand. As you practice you will be able to focus your tension, and your relaxation, to just one group of muscles.

★ How to do progressive muscle relaxation.

- To begin, find a comfortable position for yourself, either lying in bed or in a comfortable chair. Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths, simply enjoying the opportunity to have a rest. Throughout the exercise, if thoughts overcrowd your mind, try and gently push them aside. Try not to worry or stress about things that may come to your mind, just focus on breathing relaxation in and tension out. Once you feel ready, begin the exercise.
- Begin tightening each group of muscles (see the list below) one at a time. Most people find it easiest to begin with the muscle groups in the feet and work their way up the body all the way to the head and face. For each muscle group that you tighten, hold the tension in those muscles for about 5-10 seconds. Then relax the muscles you just tensed up for about 20-30 seconds.
- Focus on how different the muscles feel once you have released the tension – try to feel any tightness and pain flow out of the muscles as you exhale. Feel the muscles relax and become loose and limp, with the tension just flowing away. Focus on and notice the difference between tension and relaxation.
- Do this for each muscle group and keep noticing how each muscle group stays relaxed as you move on to the next set of muscles. Your overall feeling of relaxation should get deeper, the more muscle groups you involve.
- Some people find it helpful to say a cue word as you let the tension go and exhale -some suggestions include 'peace,' 'relax,' 'let it go,' 'it's okay,' and 'stay calm.' You may be able to think of another word or phrase that works best for you.





- Once you have finished tensing and relaxing all the muscle groups, keep your eyes closed for a short while and enjoy the feeling of relaxation a little longer.
- If you are doing PMR before going to bed you should find it easy to fall asleep afterward and your sleep should be more restful. If you are going back to your active day, then breathe in deeply a few times...wiggle your fingers and toes... breathe in deeply again and open your eyes.
- By deep breathing and stretching you are sending the message to your body that it's time to be alert again. You should feel relaxed but quite re-freshed after these exercises. Get up slowly once you have finished, allowing time for your blood flow to return to normal.

Area of focus	Tense the area by ...
Lower legs	Pointing your toes and tensing your calves
Upper legs	Pressing your thighs together and pulling your kneecaps up
Hands/Upper arms	Making a fist with each hand and pulling it in toward the inner arm
Arms	Making a muscle in each arm
Stomach	Pulling your belly button into your spine
Chest	Taking a deep breath
Shoulders	Hunching your shoulders toward your ears
Jaw	Clenching your teeth together
Lower face	Pressing your lips firmly together
Eyes	Closing your eyes tightly
Forehead	Frowning and drawing your eyebrows together

Notes



Notes

