

WEEK BY WEEK GUIDE FOR NEWBORN SLEEP

WEEK 1

CONGRATULATIONS!!! You're a Mother (or Father)!! I will bet you are likely VERY tired (from labor and the week or two — or ten — leading up to labor where sleep gets rough), and also SO full of emotions/hormones! Hopefully many good ones. This week will go by IN A BLUR.

Your little pea (or peas in case you had multiples!) is the sleepest they are ever going to be this week. Follow your doctor/pediatrician/lactation consultants' advice on feeding baby, which will seem like, and nearly is, constant in many cases. Your baby may also have "day/night confusion" which just means baby will probably be wide awake in the middle of the night for long periods of time and may also be trying to sleep for very long (longer than 2 hour stretches) during the day.

Throughout the first week of life, try exposing your baby to direct sunlight multiple times during the day — especially when they are awake. The sun is the best and quickest way to help them re-orient to life on the outside. Even on cloudy days, the retina and brain are very sensitive to sunlight and the sun will help baby organize their days and nights very quickly. At night, keep lighting very low — especially for feedings and diaper changes when possible. This too will help baby sort out their days and nights more quickly.

To the extent possible, please try to get in a nap or two each day for yourself. The old adage of, "sleep when baby sleeps" isn't always realistic for many reasons, but if you have any help at all during the day, I suggest feeding baby, handing them off to another caretaker, and sleeping until they are hungry again. Newborns can eat very frequently, but as long as your pediatrician approves, you should be able to get away with feedings at least 60–90 minutes apart throughout the day. It's okay to ask your partner or spouse (or grandma or whoever is helping) to hold the baby for at least one hour while you nap. Doing this 1–2 times a day will go a very, very long way in helping you heal and recover, and will also greatly help your emotional balance.

Also keep in mind that your body truly is on an emotional/hormonal roller coaster these days and you may feel, quite frankly, all out of sorts. Go easy on yourself, and again, try to squeeze in as much sleep as you can. Your number one job (outside of sleeping and recovering) is feeding baby — however you choose to make that happen. Also remember that newborns can be incredibly fussy with lots of gas bubbles - so burping them after each feeding is also a good idea. Now take in those baby cuddles, and get ready for one of the most meaningful experiences of your life: parenthood.

Natalie Willes

THE BABY SLEEP TRAINER

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WEEK 2

You're probably settling into home and your new reality. You've also probably had the least amount of sleep in your life (if this isn't your first, it's all coming back to you now isn't it?), and if your baby has started taking short naps, the lack of "breaks" in your day may be catching up to you. If you feel your baby is sleeping well during the day, and even at night, that's wonderful!

Many babies sleep very deeply during the day and at night in the first weeks of life. That may change, however, so don't be distressed if and when sleep becomes more fragmented. At this age babies typically sleep about 16–17 hours a day, and they are often only able to be awake happily and comfortably for 20–50 minutes before needing to sleep again.

If you haven't checked out my swaddle how-to yet, go take a peek. A good, tight swaddle (even if you think baby hates it — I promise they don't and some just need to get used to it) will go a VERY long way in getting your baby to sleep well for both naps and nighttime. Finally, start to focus on learning your baby's unique tired signs (eye-rubbing, fussiness, a glazed expression, etc.), and try to put them down for a nap (swaddled!) as soon as you see one. Babies can exhibit a very wide variety of tired signs, so start to pay close attention around minute 20–30 of wakefulness and see if you can catch their sleep cue. If you do, and if you get them swaddled and down for a nap quickly, you have the best bet at getting baby to fall asleep easily for their nap.

WEEK 3

You're starting to see more and more of baby's alert moments now, and you may catch yourself just staring into one another's eyes. This week you might want to take advantage of those alert moments and try to practice feeding baby while keeping them totally alert. It's helpful to do this as soon as they wake up from a nap. It may still be hard for baby to stay awake for the whole feeding, but like mentioned in the videos — you can try rubbing their feet, changing/removing their clothes mid-feeding, or changing their

diaper. This is great practice for you and baby so that down the road baby learns to take in full feedings instead of "snoozing on the job." If baby is taking long naps during the day (meaning naps over 2 hours in length), think about whether or not you should start trying to rouse baby after the 2-hour mark. As mentioned in the series, limiting day time naps to 2 hours is the single best way to encourage baby to save up their longer stretches of sleep for nighttime!

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WEEK 4

Baby is one month old! Congratulations! This is a good week to start getting into the habit of putting baby down for naps: 1) in their crib, 2) in a darkened room, and 3) with continuous, white noise. You don't have to do this every time, but try to aim for naps happening this way at least 1-2 times each day. Don't forget to have a baby monitor mounted out of reach of baby — preferably on the wall and never on or in the crib. While baby doesn't need to nap this way for every nap each day, it would be wise for them to start to sleep this way at night. You should still be room sharing, unless your pediatrician has given you the okay to put baby down alone in their nursery.

And speaking of bedtime, if you haven't already established a short, simple bedtime routine, do so now. Jammies, a song, and a kiss is great. Remember, it doesn't need to be elaborate at all — there's no evidence suggesting a lengthy bedtime routine actually helps baby sleep better at night. Lastly, now is a good time to pick when morning begins, and stick to it (within 30 minutes) each day. For example, you decide 7am is when morning begins, so every morning you'll get baby up at this time and start their day with a full feeding. This will help set you in the right direction to have a consistent daytime nap schedule. As with everything else, if this is stressful to you for any reason, feel free to wait a few weeks before establishing a set start time to each day.

WEEK 5

Baby is getting more and more alert for longer stretches of time. They may be showing tired signs now sometime between the 30-60 minute mark, and possibly even longer toward the end of the day. Keep working on adding in more feedings during the day where baby stays completely awake. And if you haven't started an eat-wake-sleep cycle pattern, try it this week. Put baby down when they show a tired sign (swaddled, dark room, white noise),

then feed them as soon as they wake up — keeping them awake their entire feeding (or as long as possible!). If they fall asleep during the feeding, wake them up and keep them awake until their next tired sign. Baby is probably giving you a long stretch of sleep sometime in the beginning of the night now. Now is a great time to try a dreamfeed! Re-watch video 4 if you forgot how to properly do a dreamfeed, or read my blog.

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WEEK 6

Ok, don't panic, but this week (through week 8) is where things may start to get a little rough. Your previously angelic, always-sleepy baby may turn a corner here. Things like reflux/GERD may start to appear which can throw you for a loop. If your baby is constantly spitting up (a lot), arching their back in pain before/during/after feeding, crying before/during/after feeding, and their stool changes from the typical newborn yellow curdles — you may have a reflux-y baby. Talk to your pediatrician ASAP and keep monitoring their symptoms. Reflux is temporary, but can drastically change baby's

mood and sleep patterns. Do not give in to the urge to prop baby up with any sleep device or elevate one side of their crib. It is too dangerous as baby can slip down to the other end and have fatal consequences. If there aren't any noticeable spikes in baby's fussiness, hooray! Whatever the case may be, keep encouraging baby to follow the eat-wake-sleep cycle. And if needed (and COMPLETELY supervised), allow baby to sleep in the swing or carrier during the day to get through these less-than-peachy weeks (but only if the pediatrician says occasional swing naps, or the like, are safe and okay).

WEEK 7

If you haven't yet established the eat-wake-sleep cycle, do you find yourself "feeding-baby-to-sleep"? Here's a reminder that while feeding-to-sleep can be incredibly effective in getting baby snoozing, it is extremely hard to extricate yourself from this relationship as baby gets older and more aware. Meaning that as baby gets older and wakes between sleep cycles (after having fallen asleep on the breast or bottle), they will require the breast or bottle again to "bridge their sleep cycle"

and keep sleeping. I don't know about you, but being woken up every 30-45 minutes during the night is the last thing I want happening to you! If baby is starting to fight going down for naps and nighttime, step up your bouncing, pacifier, shushing, rocking game. Resist the urge to feed to sleep! Of course it will happen sometimes no matter what, but trying to consciously avoid it now will be massively helpful to you in the future.

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WEEKS 8–11

Baby is 2 months old! Yay! You're probably starting to see inklings of their personality which is very exciting, and very rewarding. Baby is probably giving you a consistent stretch of long sleep in the beginning of the night ("long" meaning anything over 4 hours)! Some lucky moms may even see baby sleeping through the ENTIRE night! If this is you, just be sure your pediatrician gives the okay for baby to sleep through the night without a feeding. If your baby is sleeping longer than 3–4 hours without eating overnight, it's a good idea to check in with the pediatrician and make sure it's not necessary to wake them overnight.

You and baby are probably hitting your stride together, and hopefully any hiccups that came in the past couple weeks are resolving themselves. From now on through week 12, things should stay more or less consistent — as your baby is becoming a lot more aware, enjoy those smiles and emerging giggles. One last thing to remember, as SOON as your baby starts showing signs of thinking of rolling over, stop swaddling them immediately. If you choose to continue swaddling baby after 8 weeks of age, get the okay from your pediatrician that this practice is safe and acceptable to continue.

WEEK 12

Baby is 3 months old! Hooray! You're closing the book on baby's "fourth trimester" and entering infancy. How baby is sleeping now for you is a very good indication of how they will be sleeping throughout childhood. If they sleep for very short periods of time, are very fussy to go down at night, and are generally strong willed about other things - you have a baby who will GREATLY benefit from my sleep training method come 16 weeks old. If you have a baby who goes down relatively easily, sometimes sleeps longer

than 30–45 minutes for naps, and is only waking once or not waking at all in the night — you have one of the lucky few with a dream sleeper! We don't get to decide what kind of sleeper we have, but we can continue to encourage them to get their best sleep. The most important thing to keep in mind is that REGARDLESS of the type of sleeper you have, they can learn to sleep through the night and take healthy naps. Some babies may just benefit more than others from a stricter training regiment.

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WEEK 13

This week is a good time to start putting baby down for their first nap around 8:30am. Why 8:30am? Based on a 7am–7pm schedule (which is the pattern most infants biologically gravitate towards), the ideal nap times for your baby are around 8:30am, 11:30am and 3:00pm. This is based on you feeding them as soon as they wake up at 6:30–7:00am and then again following each nap, with the final feeding 30 minutes before bedtime. This schedule allows baby to fall asleep for their naps before needing another feeding. Also, something to keep in mind: the first nap of the day from here on out in your child's life is the most important. It tends to set the tone for

the rest of the day. So ideally, this nap should take place at home as often as possible. Keep in mind that at this young age, most babies are still napping 4 or 5 times each day. Don't worry just yet about putting your baby on a three nap schedule, just keep in mind that if you choose to pursue a more regimented sleep training program in order to help your baby sleep fully through the night and fall asleep independently (without relying on you, or anything else to fall asleep), their first nap of the day will likely need to start closer to 8:30am, regardless of when baby actually woke to start their day.

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WEEKS 14–15

These weeks are great! Baby's sleep cycles are starting to become more consistent. And because of that you can start giving your baby a chance to try learning to fall asleep on their own. This means putting them down in their crib (with darkness and white noise) while still awake and seeing if after 5–10 minutes, they can settle themselves down to sleep.

In my sleep training method I encourage parents to do a "5-minute soothing routine" with their baby prior to putting them down in bed, which includes holding them very still or swaying very gently for 5 minutes, or until baby shows a tired sign (eye rub, burying their head into your neck/arm, etc.). If your baby shows a tired sign before the five minutes are up, you can put them down and give them 5–10 minutes to fall asleep on their own.

Babies tend to fall asleep most easily for the first nap of the day, so I would spend weeks 15 and 16 attempting to allow baby to try to fall asleep on their own for at least one nap each day. If your baby isn't asleep after 5–10 minutes, feel free to pick them up and assist them to sleep however you normally do, or check on them for about 30 seconds and make sure they're fully healthy and safe, then let them try to fall asleep on their own again for another 5–10 minutes. You can continue this cycle a few times to see if they'll successfully fall asleep on their own before stopping the nap attempt.

Further, expect your baby to cry throughout these attempts. If that's not something you're comfortable with, no big deal! It's totally okay to keep helping your baby fall asleep so they don't cry. If you do choose to let your child start trying to fall asleep on their own, make sure the short periods of crying are okay with your pediatrician.

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WEEK 16

You've made it! Baby is 16 weeks old and now ready for formal sleep training (if that is something that interests you). Something else to keep an eye out for is the "4 month sleep regression." It can start earlier (around 3 months) in some babies or a few weeks later than the 4 month mark for others. This period of time is when your baby is making huge mental leaps and generally becoming much more aware of the world around her. Learning what the 4 month sleep regression looks like, and how you can deal with it, will be very helpful for you in navigating this challenging shift in your child's sleep.

This is the final thought I want to leave you with — sleep training is beneficial for all babies. Pursuing a formal sleep training program helps your baby learn to fall asleep on their own for naps and bedtime, which then helps them fall back to sleep independently throughout the night. I have created an affordable Online Training

Series with options for hands on support to help you teach your child to learn to sleep through the night and take healthy naps. You don't need to start right at 16 weeks, and rest assured that it's never too late to sleep train! Many families don't choose to formally sleep train until 7, 10, or even 15 months of age. This Online Training Series works with babies until the age they are able to climb out of their cribs (which I promise you is something he'll eventually be able to do ;)).

If you don't decide to sleep train, do decide now how you are going to help your baby fall asleep and be prepared to commit to that for the long haul as your baby will likely need that help for naps, bedtime, and throughout the night. Many families find themselves in sustainable sleep patterns with their infants for many months without feeling the need to sleep train. If that's you, that's fantastic! But if that ever changes in the future, Baby Sleep Trainer is always here to help.

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