

Let Sleeping Babies Lie Help Baby Go to Sleep

By

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As any new parent knows, infants do not sleep like babies. Neither do mothers and fathers. Lack of sleep is one of the hardest adjustments new parents have to make. In a recent poll of parents with children six months old and younger, one-third of the respondents reported waking up from one to eight times a night. Often interrupted sleep can be as exhausting as no sleep at all. No wonder getting babies to sleep through the night is considered such a challenge. While there is no one size fits all approach to this age old problem, there are some methods parents can use to lull their babies into a peaceful sleep.

Bedtime Tips for Parents

" Same Time Same Place. Establishing a nighttime routine is one of the most important steps parents can take towards developing healthy sleep habits for their baby. Many pediatricians and experts believe most sleep problems children experience are the result of not learning how to fall asleep on their own. Having a consistent nighttime routine can help babies learn this process and develop regular sleep patterns. A sample routine may include feeding, bathing, dressing, reading or singing, and then settling her into bed. This routine should be repeated in the same place at around the same time every night. The consistent repetition ensures that the child associates the actions, patterns, and place with sleep. Another cue parents can give their babies is a bedtime message. This message can be anything from a favorite lullaby to a simple "I love you. Sweet dreams." Hearing the song or the words every night will let the child know it is time to sleep.

" The Sound of Silence. Many parents suffer the misconception that babies need a quiet environment in order to sleep. Children only require complete silence if that is what they become accustomed to. While in the womb, babies experience anything but silence. They hear the hum of their mother's voice, the swish of body fluids, and muffled sounds from the outside world. To a baby submerged in amniotic fluid, all of these sounds have a soft edge to them. These soft white noises are often replicated in the sounds of a vacuum cleaner, air conditioner or dishwasher; all of which have a calming effect on babies. Another thing that relaxes babies is the sound of a heartbeat. For nine months, every sound a baby hears is set against the backdrop of her mother's heartbeat. Therefore, it makes sense that this sound is a comforting one. Many lullaby CD's incorporate the sound of a heartbeat into the music, which has been proven to soothe and lull babies to sleep.

" Talk the Talk. Crying is how babies communicate. Cries and screams, like words, differ from situation to situation. Babies have different cries for hunger, pain, sleepiness, boredom, and attention. When parents learn to distinguish their baby's cries, they are less likely to jump at every whimper that comes over the baby monitor. If a baby wakes in the night and recognizes that her body is still tired, she will out of habit let out an "I am sleepy cry." Then, it is quite possible that she will roll over and return to sleep. On the other hand, if a parent rushes to the crib before deciphering the cry, she may become stimulated and too alert to lull herself back to sleep. Parents should give it minute and listen to what their babies are trying to tell them, and then respond.

" Respond in Kind. Even though babies have different cries for different needs, it is important to point out that during the first three months of life, children are survival based. Therefore, during this time you can in no way be too attentive or spoil a child. In these first precious months children establish a foundation for future security and emotional health. Parents should listen for cues, but never let a baby cry it out. When attending to a baby at night, avoid stimulation by keeping the lights low, speaking softly if necessary, and assuring her with a gentle touch. This will help the child return to sleep more easily and on her own.