

FREE GUIDE · PARENTING

Baby Sleep Basics

the First Year

A calm, practical guide for new parents: safe sleep rules, how much babies sleep, a simple bedtime routine, gentle ways to help your baby settle, and a sleep log to spot patterns.

10

safe sleep rules

5

step bedtime routine

1

week sleep log

MOST IMPORTANT

Safe sleep comes first

These guidelines, based on recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), help reduce the risk of sleep-related infant deaths, including SIDS. Follow them for every sleep, naps and nights, until your baby's first birthday.

- 1 Place your baby **on their back** for every sleep
- 2 Use a **firm, flat, level** surface: a crib, bassinet, or playyard that meets safety standards
- 3 Use only a **fitted sheet**, with no pillows, blankets, bumpers, or soft toys
- 4 **Room-share, don't bed-share**: keep baby's own sleep space in your room, ideally for at least the first 6 months
- 5 Never sleep with your baby on a **sofa, armchair, or adult bed**
- 6 Avoid **inclined** sleepers; move baby to a flat surface if they fall asleep in a car seat, swing, or carrier
- 7 Keep baby from **overheating**: light layers and no hat indoors
- 8 Stop **swaddling** as soon as your baby shows signs of trying to roll
- 9 Keep your home **smoke-free**, and avoid alcohol and drugs that cause drowsiness while caring for baby
- 10 Offer a **pacifier** at sleep time if your baby takes one; don't hang it around the neck

Breastfeeding and vaccinations are also linked to a lower risk of SIDS. Ask your pediatrician about what's right for your baby, and always follow their advice.

How much do babies sleep?

Babies sleep a lot, but in short stretches at first. Every baby is different, so treat these as rough guides, not targets.

Age	Total sleep in 24 hours	What to expect
0–3 months	About 14–17 hours	Short sleeps day and night; frequent feeds; no real pattern yet
4–12 months	About 12–16 hours, including naps	Longer night sleep develops; 2–3 naps a day, dropping to about 2 by the end of the first year

Normal in the early months

- ☐ Waking every 2–3 hours to feed
- ☐ Noisy breathing, grunts, and twitches in sleep
- ☐ Mixing up day and night at first
- ☐ Short naps of 30–45 minutes

Signs your baby is getting tired

- ☐ Yawning and rubbing eyes
- ☐ Staring into space or looking away
- ☐ Fussing, jerky movements, or crying
- ☐ Pulling at ears

Help your baby tell day from night

- ☐ Daytime: open curtains and keep normal sounds
- ☐ Daytime: play and talk during awake times
- ☐ Night: keep lights dim and voices soft
- ☐ Night: feed and change calmly, then back to bed

Our baby's tired signs

What does your baby do when they're getting sleepy? Write it down so every caregiver knows.

A simple bedtime routine

A short, predictable routine helps your baby learn that sleep is coming. Many families start one from around 6–8 weeks. Keep it to 20–30 minutes, in the same order every night.

A 5-step bedtime routine

1. **Bath or wash:** a warm bath or a gentle wipe-down
2. **Change and dress:** fresh diaper and comfortable sleepwear
3. **Feed:** a calm feed in a dim, quiet room
4. **Wind down:** a short story, song, or quiet cuddle
5. **Into bed:** on their back in their own sleep space, ideally drowsy but awake

Drowsy but awake

SELF-SETTLING

Putting your baby down when sleepy but not fully asleep can help them learn to fall asleep on their own over time. It's fine if it doesn't work every time.

Pause before picking up

OLDER BABIES

Babies often stir and fuss briefly between sleep cycles. Waiting a minute or two may let them resettle. Always respond to real crying or hunger.

White noise

CALMING

A steady, gentle sound can mask household noise. Keep the device away from the crib and the volume low.

A dark room

ENVIRONMENT

Blackout curtains help with early mornings and daytime naps. A dim night light helps you check on baby.

Nap tips

- ☐ Use a short version of your bedtime routine
- ☐ Put baby down at the first tired signs
- ☐ Naps in the crib or bassinet when possible
- ☐ On the go is fine sometimes; keep it safe

Keep it consistent

- ☐ Same order of steps each night
- ☐ Similar bedtime most nights
- ☐ Share the routine with all caregivers
- ☐ Give a new habit 1–2 weeks to work

Common sleep challenges

Almost every family hits rough patches. Most are temporary and linked to growth, development, or a change in routine.

Challenge	What may help
Short naps	Watch for tired signs, darken the room, and try a short wind-down before naps
Night wakings	Keep night care calm and boring; young babies still need night feeds
Early waking	Blackout curtains, and keep the room dim until your chosen wake time
Sleep regressions	Often around growth spurts and new skills; keep your routine steady, and it usually passes
Teething	Extra comfort; ask your pediatrician about safe pain relief
Travel and illness	Expect disruption, then return to your routine afterward

Call your pediatrician if your baby...

- ❗ Has trouble breathing, or pauses in breathing
- ❗ Is unusually hard to wake or very floppy
- ❗ Has a fever (very important in young babies)
- ❗ Snores loudly or gasps regularly
- ❗ Isn't feeding well or has fewer wet diapers
- ❗ Cries in a way that worries you

Look after yourself too: sleep when you can, accept help, and take turns at night with a partner or family member. If you ever feel too exhausted to care for your baby safely, put your baby down in their crib and ask someone for help.

TRACK IT

One-week sleep log

Jot down sleep and wake times for a week. Patterns often appear quickly, and the log is helpful to share with your pediatrician.

Day	Woke up	Naps (times)	Bedtime	Night wakings	Notes
Mon					
Tue					
Wed					
Thu					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					

Safe sleep space checklist

- ☐ Firm, flat mattress that fits the crib snugly
- ☐ Room at a comfortable temperature
- ☐ Fitted sheet only, nothing else in the crib
- ☐ Baby placed on their back every time
- ☐ Crib in our room, away from cords and blinds
- ☐ Everyone who cares for baby knows the rules

Want more help? For a step-by-step baby sleep program for parents, see [Baby Sleep Miracle](#) → (more on page 7).

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want a step-by-step sleep program?

If you'd like a structured program with more detailed routines and settling techniques, here's one designed for parents. Use any program alongside the safe sleep rules on page 2 and your pediatrician's advice.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAM

Baby Sleep Miracle

Step-by-step routines

Practical routines for helping babies settle and sleep.

For parents

Written for parents of babies and young toddlers.

Several languages

Available in English and other languages.

Digital access

Read on your phone, tablet, or computer.

[See Baby Sleep Miracle →](#)

Disclosure: this is an affiliate link. If you buy through it, MyInfoLabs.com may earn a commission at no extra cost to you. Every baby is different, and no program can guarantee results. Always follow safe sleep guidelines and your pediatrician's advice. Optional extras may be offered at checkout; see the seller's page for current details and refund terms.

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Wishing you restful nights,

Uday Chandra

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