

# Newborn Sleep Guide

## 0-4 Months



The comprehensive sleep booklet for newborns. Our aim is to support the foundations of safe sleep, healthy sleep habits and self settling for newborns. This guide will help to establish realistic expectations for parents with their newborns' sleep habits.

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# Welcome!



I'm Natalie, the founder and owner of The Sleep Empire. Congratulations on your new arrival. I'm sure you're feeling overwhelmed with excitement, anxiety and anticipation to take your baby home and start your journey as a parent. I am incredibly passionate about educating and informing new parents on ways they can support their little one's sleep habits from birth. Don't worry, you won't be sleep training your newborn in the traditional sense. There is no 'cry it out' or harsh elements to my methods. In fact, the sleep training that I recommend, will NEVER include 'cry it out'.

We can set your baby up for success with sleep from birth. Sleep training is only recommended from 4 months old and is only needed if there are some sleep challenges. We can support your little one in developing sleep foundations that help them create positive, long term sleep habits that will support their sleep as they get older.

I am a certified Baby and Toddler Sleep Consultant, Early Childhood Educator, Circle of Security Parenting Facilitator and Mum. I am here to support you and hold your hand through the tough times. My expertise in Sleep and Parenting bring together the world of science, attachment and sleep to give you a holistic and wholesome approach to supporting your little one.



xx Natalie

# Introduction

The fourth trimester or the first 3 months of life is a big adjustment, for the baby and their parent/s. When we have our baby, there is no 'how to' or 'here's the best way to get them to sleep' after you get home from the hospital. We are expected to use our best judgement and instinct to know what to do. For some parents that works, for others it's a challenge! We can find ourselves in a pattern of survival which can lead to us making decisions that actually make sleep worse for both our babies and us and sometimes unsafe.

Studies show that sleep deprivation in new mothers is one of the largest contributors to postpartum depression (Goyal et al, 2007 & Wolfson et al, 2003). Despite what the wider population believe and practice, there are many ways we can support our newborns sleep and our new parents sleep to avoid sleep deprivation. We want to manage our newborns sleep before it gets to the point where our parents feel hopeless, exhausted and tired enough to make unsafe sleep decisions for their baby.

Education is a big part of making the right sleep choices for our children. That's what I'm here for! Let me reassure you, there is no right or wrong time to start. You can start from birth or from feeding to sleep at 4 months old. The important thing to note is that you want to make a change.

Let's begin with the science of sleep for our beautiful newborns.



# The Science of Newborn Sleep



During the day our babies sleep is broken into 10 minute blocks that make up different aspects of their sleep cycle. Each sleep cycle is 40-50 minutes long, meaning your baby has many periods of sleep and wakefulness. During the night, their sleep cycles move to being 2-4 hours long and these are separated into NON-REM and REM sleep (see below).

*Newborns are either in ACTIVE SLEEP or QUIET SLEEP.*

**Active Sleep:** Baby will be moving their arms, legs, flickering their eyes and look like they are awake. Newborns are in active sleep for 50% of the time.

- TIP: Don't rush to them, leave them to fall back into a quiet sleep. Only get them up when you hear them waking up. If they need help going back to sleep, pat their bums until you feel they have relaxed into a quiet/deep sleep. (Shush Pat)

**Quiet Sleep:** Baby will be very still and look like they are in a deep sleep.

**NON-REM:** A deep state of sleep that happens in the first few hours of the night. This is a very restorative sleep, making it hard for them to wake up. Babies usually come out of NON-REM sleep between 10.30pm-midnight, which is why they tend to wake up for a feed during this period.

**REM:** The lighter cycles of sleep that happen after midnight. Babies in REM sleep are easily woken and can wake up closer to each hour, rather than every 2-4 hours. This stage of sleep can be harder to support back to sleep.

# The Science of Newborn Sleep

## Hormones that impact sleep

### Melatonin

Melatonin is known as the sleep hormone. This hormone is crucial in helping us fall asleep with ease. Every body goes through fluctuations of melatonin in their body, making it easier to fall asleep at the peak points. At birth, babies have a store of melatonin from their birth mother. This store wears off between 7-8 weeks. Babies should start sleeping in the dark at this time to support melatonin production.

### Cortisol

Cortisol is known as the awake hormone. This hormone is essential for waking up and staying awake. Peaking in the morning, it sets us up for our day. When babies have too much cortisol, it becomes a stress hormone causing them to stay awake and have disrupted sleep.

## Biological Sleep Windows

There are three windows of the day where sleep is the most optimal for children. This is when melatonin is at an ideal level for sleep.

*These are the three optimal times for sleep:*

**9-10am**

**12-2pm**

**6-7pm**

*Lots of parents find the afternoon nap the hardest of the day. This is due to the lack of hormonal support within their babies body to support them off to sleep.*

# The Science of Newborn Sleep

## Circadian Rhythm

This is our natural, internal process that regulates the sleep-wake cycle over a 24 hour period. Other professionals call it a 'internal body clock'. Or circadian rhythm develops from 3 months of age.

The circadian rhythm is effected by three main influences:

**Food**

**Light**

**Social  
Interaction**

**These three elements will entrain your babies sleep habits. This can make it harder or easier for them to sleep. The more consistent you are with their feeding, play and sleep patterns, the easier their sleep will be.**

Top tips for Circadian Rhythm:

- Wake your baby up at the same time every day
- Use sunlight to your advantage. Get outside as early as possible in the day to set your babies biological clock. Use the afternoon sun to signal to their brain that sleep is coming.
- After 8 weeks, avoid using a night light during the night (red or orange light is ok)
- When reducing night feeds, keep light and social interaction to a minimum.

# Realistic Expectations

When we have a baby, there is no book that is given to us at the hospital with all the outlining aspects of their growth and development. Most of the time we are sitting in the middle of the night googling about whether our baby is normal. New parents often feel lost when it comes to their babies sleep and can make choices that could harm their baby and cause them to become sleep deprived with no answers.

So, let's lay down some realistic expectations to take the pressure off and normalise newborn sleep.



Knowing that all of these are normal parts of a babies world can help relieve the pressure and stress of a new parent. Following some basic sleep habits can support your new baby. However, sometimes your baby will just want to sleep on you for every nap of that day, this is OK! This is a normal part of them developing their attachment to you. If you are in doubt and feel like you are on the verge of breaking, seek help in a sleep consultant or your GP.

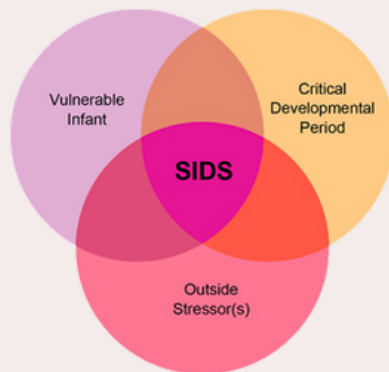


# Safe Sleep Guidelines

To understand the safe sleep guidelines, there is some background knowledge we need to go through first. Children under the age of 12 months can be at risk of SIDS when certain aspects of their environment are present during sleep. Let's dive right in to some facts and ways we can reduce the risk of SIDS for our little ones.

Definitions: *SIDS: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. SUDI: Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants*

SIDS or SUDI can be caused by many impeding factors - some we cannot see. It is important to make sure our sleep environment is safe for all newborns to ensure they are not at risk of SIDS or SUDI.



SIDS or SUDI can happen when the following things are present:

1. When we have a vulnerable infant (this is something we cannot see). It is a risk factor that is built into a child's DNA and can mean they are at risk of SIDS or SUDI
2. Outside Stressors: These contribute and create a higher risk of a child dying from SIDS or SUDI. By avoiding them, we are reducing the risk.
  - a. NO Tummy or side sleeping
  - b. NO Bed sharing
  - c. NO Blankets or cot bumpers
  - d. NO Comforters
  - e. NO Smoking, alcohol or drugs while bed sharing
3. Critical Development Period: The first 6 months of life are the Critical Development Period.

This information is included to educate parents. I believe parents should have as much information regarding their babies sleep and how they can keep their children safe while sleeping. Should you need more information, send me an email or find more research on the Red Nose website.

# Safe Sleep Guidelines

So, what can we do to help keep our babies safe while they sleep?

1. Always place babies to sleep on their backs for naps and overnight.
2. Keep your babies head and face uncovered
3. Have a smoke free and drug free home (before and after birth)
4. Have a safe sleeping environment during the night and day
5. Mattress is firm, clean and flat
6. There are no blankets, toys, pillows, cot bumpers or items in the cot
7. Baby has their own cot or bassinet for sleep (no bed sharing)
8. Room share with your baby for the first 6 months

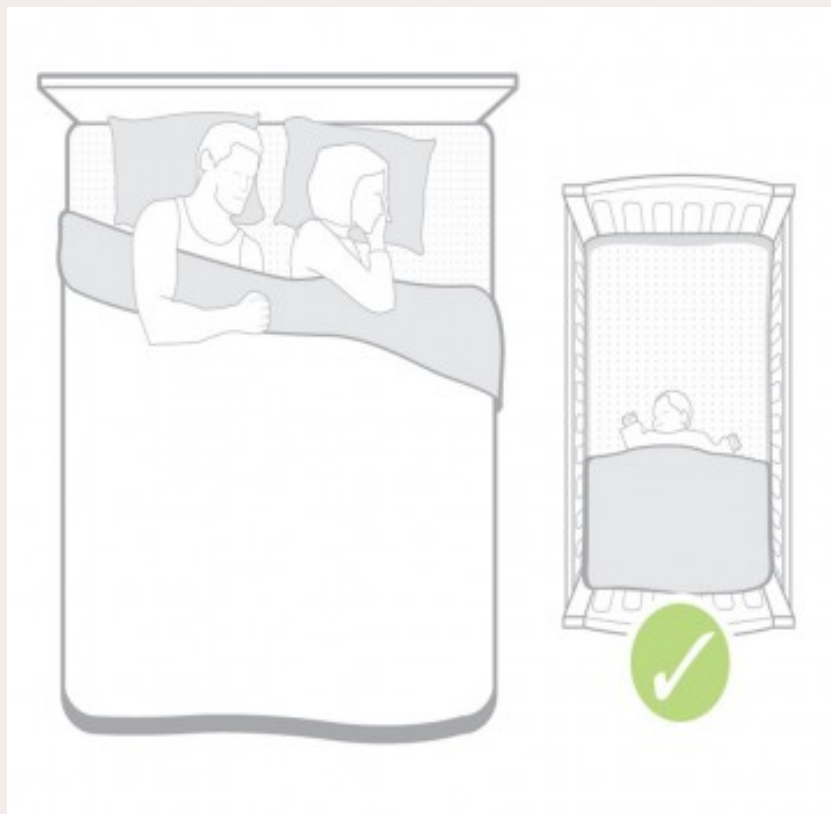
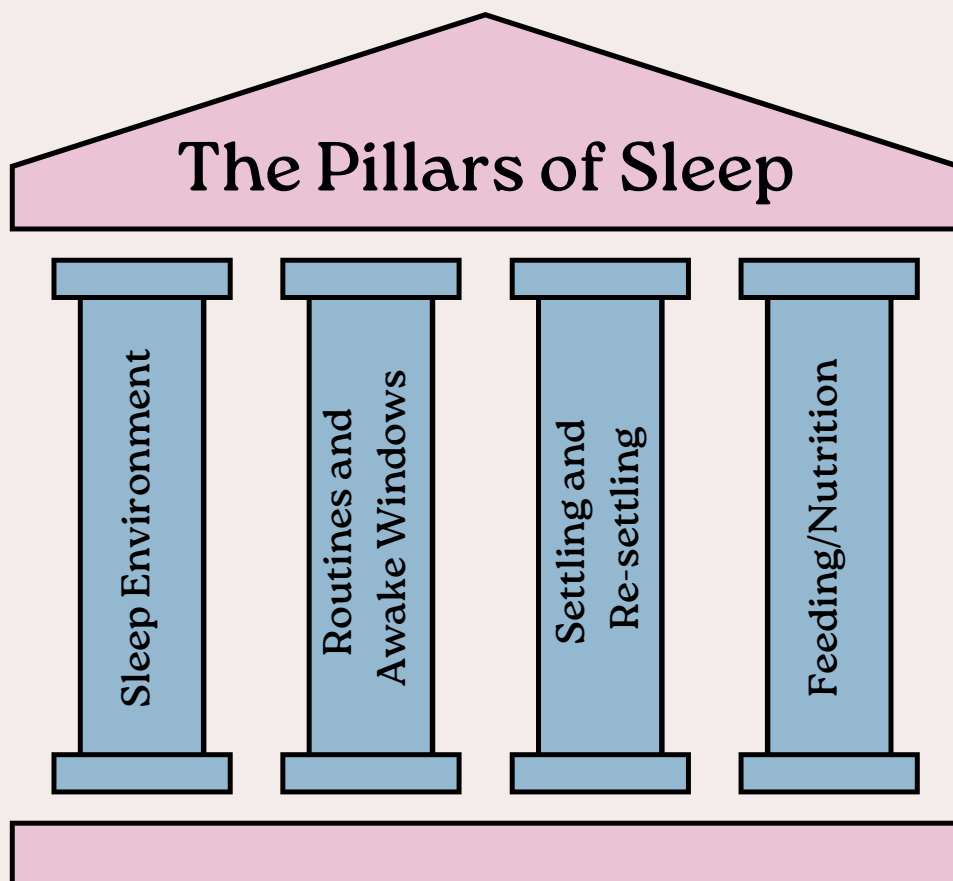


Image taken from Red Nose Australia Website

# The Pillars of Sleep

The four pillars of sleep form the foundation from which all healthy sleep habits develop. When we look at the wider picture that contributes to a baby's sleep, we can holistically acknowledge that these four elements support sleep and can impact on how well a baby sleeps.

In this section we will look into each element and work through the important aspects to take away and work on. It's important to acknowledge that with newborns, we don't need to have everything perfect from the beginning. Small goals and achievable wins are the best way to improve sleep habits and set them up for success. One day at a time, one nap at a time.



# The Pillars of Sleep

## Sleep Environment

Your babies sleep environment will set the scene for their sleep journey from birth and beyond. The basic elements of a sleep environment are:



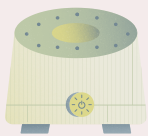
A cot that meets the Australian Standards. A firm well-fitting mattress, with a well-fitted sheet. There should be nothing else in the cot. Position the cot away from the door opening to eliminate light disruptions



A swaddle or sleeping bag. Keep a few with different togs on hand for varying weather.



Black out blinds/curtains to block out as much light as possible from their sleep space



White noise machine (to the volume of 65 decibels). You can use a Google Home or Alexa to set up a routine.



Temperature gauge that has an app. These can be found on amazon for \$20 or less. The room should be between 19°C and 21°C.



A chair is an excellent addition for their bedtime routine and night feeds.

### What to avoid:

- Mobiles hanging over the cot, these are a distraction and hazard. Place the mobile over the change table instead.
- Cot bumpers cause a SIDS risk for children under 1. For older children, it could be used to help them climb out.

# The Pillars of Sleep

## Routine and Awake Windows

When our babies are born, it can feel overwhelming to follow a routine. Around 8 weeks babies start to develop their own melatonin, so this is a great time to begin a rough routine. From 12 weeks, it is suggested to begin to have more predictable routines and predictable sleep times to help cement your babies biological clock. This helps their bodies expect sleep at certain times of the day, making it easier for them to fall asleep.

Awake windows are the period of time between each sleep we can expect your baby to stay awake. As your baby grows, this time lengthens. It is ideal that your baby is asleep by the end of their awake window. So, for a 3 month old, we can expect them to be awake for 1.5hrs at the most. This means during that 1.5hrs, we would want them to be fed, changed, fed again and then back asleep. This can feel overwhelming for new parents, however it will help to ensure your baby is not overtired, which can lead to less sleep.

When we talk about routines, we want to be sure not to feel too restricted. There would be nothing worse than expecting a new parent to stay home for every nap of every day. This is not the aim of a routine. Having a routine creates predictability for the baby and the parent. It allows you to know what to expect out of your day and when your baby needs to sleep.



# The Pillars of Sleep

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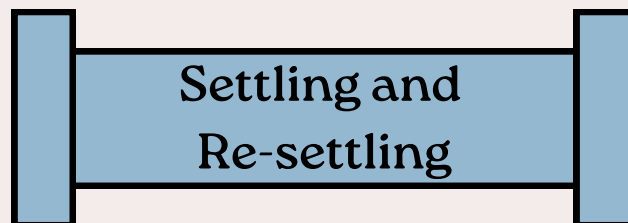
# The Pillars of Sleep

## REALISTIC SLEEP EXPECTATIONS BY AGE

As our little ones get older, their sleep needs change. Their awake windows get bigger and in turn, their need for day sleep reduces. Below is a chart with the AVERAGES for night sleep, night feeds, day sleep, number of day naps and awake windows. Please know these are averages and are not the same for every baby.

Age	Awake Window	Day Sleep	# of Naps	Night Sleep	Night Feeds
0-3 Months	45mins-1.5hrs	5-6hrs	No limit	9-11hrs	Every 2-4hrs
4 Months	1.5-2hrs	3-5hrs	3-5	10-12hrs	1-3 Feeds
5 Months	2-2.5hrs	3-4hrs	3-4	11-12hrs	1-2 Feeds
6 Months	2.50-3hrs	3-4hrs	3	11-12hrs	0-2 Feeds
7 Months	2.5-3hrs	2.5-3.5hrs	2-3	11-12hrs	0-2 Feeds
8-9 Months	2.5-3.5hrs	2.5-3hrs	2-3	11-12hrs	0-1 Feeds
10-12 Months	3-4hrs	2-3hrs	2	11-12hrs	0-1 Feeds
12-15 Months	2-4.5hrs	2-2.5hrs	1-2	11-12hrs	0-1 Feeds
15-18 Months	4-5hrs	1.5-2hrs	1	11-12hrs	None
18-24 Months	4.5-5.5hrs	1-2hrs	1	11-12hrs	None

# The Pillars of Sleep



Self settling refers to your little one's ability to fall asleep by themselves. This means they are in their cot, falling asleep without anyone supporting them. Supporting your baby into falling asleep independently is only important if the way they fall asleep now is causing stress for you as a parent. *For example: They fall asleep each nap and at bedtime with you rocking them. When they wake up during their nap or overnight, they need you to rock them back to sleep.* If this is an issue for you, then we need to look at supporting your baby into falling asleep independently. This way, when they wake up during their sleep cycle, their 'falling asleep' environment hasn't changed and they easily go back to sleep.

## **SELF SETTling: FALLING ASLEEP INDEPENDENTLY**

## **RE-SETTLING: SELF SETTling AFTER WAKING UP DURING A SLEEP**

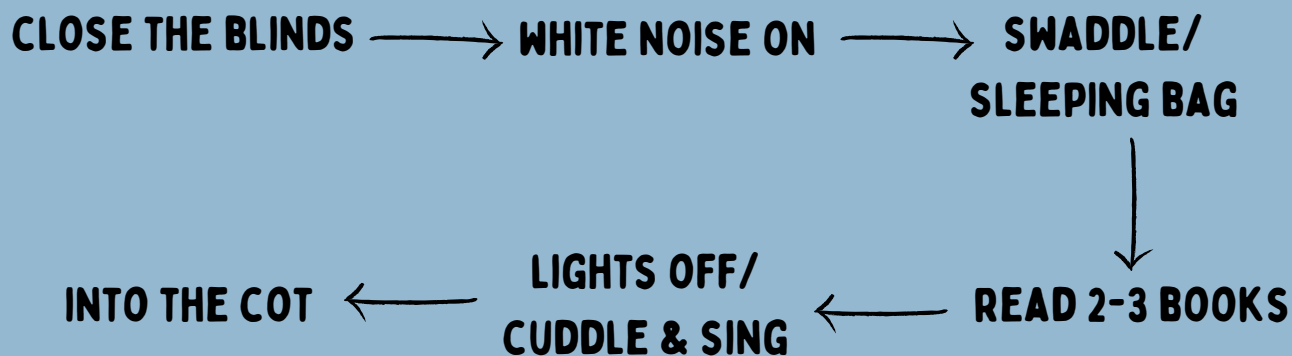
Setting up for success! We want to give our babies the best start to their sleep journey. The best way to start is to set up a consistent nap and bedtime routine. Each time we do this routine, it signals to our babies brain that *sleep is coming*. Your babies brain will then push some melatonin (sleepy hormone) to help them fall asleep with ease.

# The Pillars of Sleep

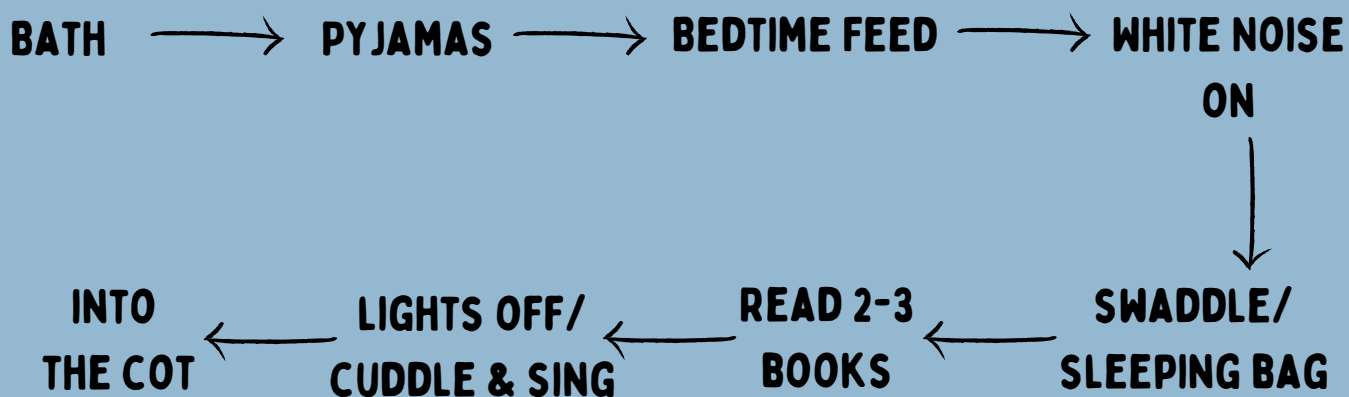
## BEDTIME ROUTINES

Pick and choose which parts of the routines work for you and keep it as consistent each day/night as possible.

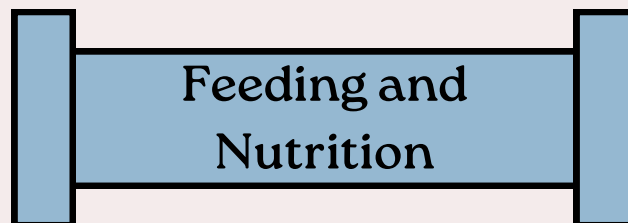
### Day Nap Routine:



### Bedtime Routine:



# The Pillars of Sleep



Feeding and nutrition is an important consideration when we talk about babies. For the first 6 months, breast or bottle feeding should be the priority. Fed is best. This means that whichever way you feed your baby, breast or bottle is perfectly fine. *Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.*

When thinking about starting solids there are a number of considerations. Firstly, let's bust some myths!

## **Myth #1: Formula fed babies sleep better than breastfed babies.**

This myth is false. Sleeping for longer periods at night is NOT due to what your baby is fed. Studies have shown that there is no difference in night wake ups for formula fed babies and breastfed babies.

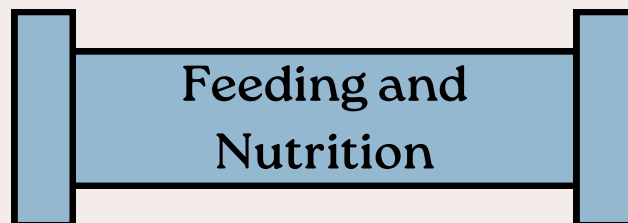
## **Myth #2: Starting solids will help my baby sleep at night.**

This myth is false. Starting solids can actually have the opposite effect. Introducing solids can disrupt night sleep as your baby's intestines are learning how to process a new form of food. This can cause gas, bloating and discomfort, causing them to wake up.

**TIP:** When starting solids, begin with lunch, at least 1 hour away from a nap. This gives them enough time to partially digest. Avoid having a dinner meal until they are 7 months old.



# The Pillars of Sleep



Tired and hungry children can have issues sleeping, so it's important to have as much knowledge as possible to equip you with ways to resolve hurdles with sleep. For our under 6 month old bubs who are not on solids yet, we need to consider how much milk they are having during the day and during the night. When we give too much milk overnight, it can steal calories from the day. This is called 'Reverse Cycling' where children consume majority of their calories at night, rather than during the day. Reverse Cycling can cause children to wake up at certain times at night expecting to be fed.

So, how many day and night feeds should my baby have according to their age?

Age	Day Feeds	Night Feeds
0-3 Months	5-8	2-4
4 Months	5	1-3 Feeds
5 Months	5	1-2 Feeds
6 Months	5	0-2 Feeds
7 Months	4	0-2 Feeds
8-9 Months	4	0-1 Feeds
10-12 Months	3-4	0-1 Feeds
12-15 Months	3	0-1 Feeds
15-18 Months	3	None
18-24 Months	1	None

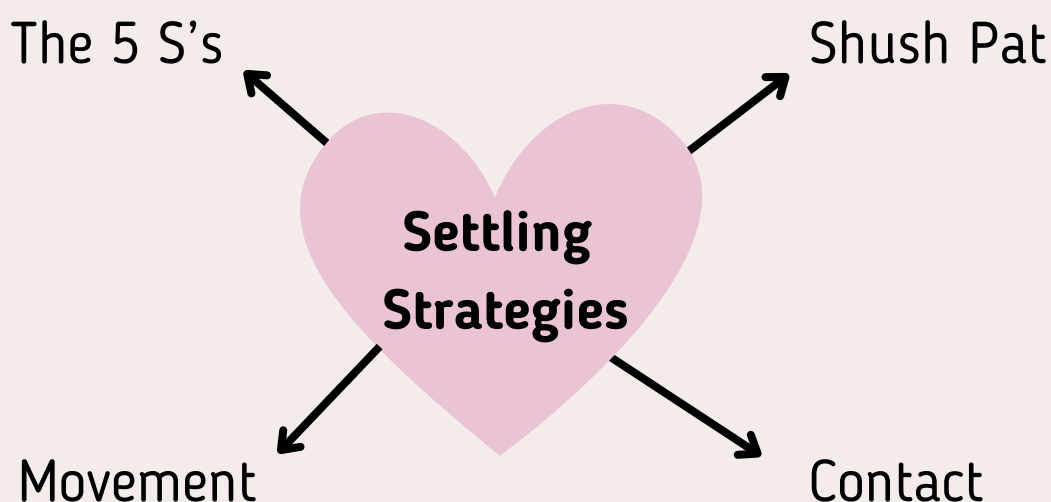
# Settling

## Newborn Settling Strategies

For the first 4 months, we like to talk about settling strategies as being incredibly hands on and responsive. We do not encourage parents to leave their babies to cry for longer than 5 minutes. (unless you are feeling vulnerable and need some time to gather yourself, calm down and reset. If you do need to, pop baby down in a safe spot, they will be ok).

Timing is imperative with newborns and settling them off to sleep. You should aim for them to be asleep by the end of their awake window. For example: Your 3 month old awake window is 45 minutes. Aim to feed, play, change and have them back asleep by the time 45 minutes has passed. This can be overwhelming, the good news is that over time their awake window gets longer and they are able to handle more awake time.

Aim to have them in their cot/ready for their nap with 5-10 minutes to spare for a wind down or to assist them to sleep.





## **The 5 S's for Settling Newborns (Harvey Karp):**

1. Swaddling: Using a wrap or cloth to contain the babies arms tightly around their body. This technique prevents the baby from flailing their arms erratically, potentially hurting themselves as they move. It also prevents them from moving around too much as they try and settle. Being swaddled reminds them of being in the womb and engages their calm reflex. Some babies may resist being swaddled, persist through this as the baby will calm down.
2. Side lying: Lying the baby on their side imitates a womb-like environment, triggering the balance centre in their inner ear. For some babies, lying on their back can create the feeling of falling, thanks to their Moro Reflex. Babies should not be laid down on their side when asleep.
3. Shushing: Use loud shushing or white noise to calm a baby. This mimics the sounds of the womb, triggering the calming reflex. White noise can be used quite loudly to begin with, as the baby settles down, reduce the noise level. White noise can be used at all times while the baby sleeps. It should not be used during play time or while the baby is awake, unless when trying to calm or settle the baby.
4. Swinging: Using your body to swing the baby in a fast back and forth motion can add onto the calming effects of the other 4 S's.
5. Sucking: When a baby is sucking on either a dummy, nipple or teat they will calm down very quickly. When used with milk it will help if the baby is hungry as well.



## **For the ultimate calming effect on very fussy babies use the Windshield wiper technique.**

- Swaddle your baby.
- Sit down and place your baby on their side, lying on the groove between your legs. Place their cheek in the palm of your hands as their body is placed along your side.
- Lean down and 'shhhhhh' near their ear - as loud as their cry.
- Swing your knees from side to side (not up and down) like a windshield wiper.
- Offer a dummy (if required)
- These strategies can be used alone or
- in conjunction with each other.
- Working out your babies preference
- will take time and patience.

## **Shush Pat:**

1. Swaddle the baby and place them on their side on their bed surface. Place one hand on their chest and the other on their back, begin patting their back to a tick tock while leaning down close to their ear and shushing. Making sure to shush as loud as their cry. Once the baby has stopped crying continue the shush-pat, reduce the level of your voice. Once you are confident they are in a deeper sleep (around 10 mins) slowly place them on their back for safe sleeping.
2. For a baby that had reflux modify this technique in this way:
3. Swaddle the baby and hold them in an upright position over your shoulder. Pat their back and shush as loud as their cry close to their ear.
4. - other modifications: the baby's cot can be raised as well to alleviate the reflux symptoms. (The cot should be returned to flat once the baby has fallen asleep).

# Settling

## **Movement:**

Settling your newborn with movement will help them fall asleep with ease. Use these methods when you're struggling with hands on settling (as described above)

- Pram nap
- Walking nap in the carrier

Car seat naps are not recommended for longer than 20 minutes due to the angle of babies head and neck. Always monitor your baby while they sleep.

## **Contact:**

When all else fails, contact naps are the best and will help your baby fall asleep. You can give them a bottle or breast feed to help settle them and allow them to sleep on you. Remove the bottle or breast once asleep to ensure their mouth is completely closed during their sleep. If they continue to drink while asleep, this could lead to them seeking a feed every time they wake up.







## **Top 5 Tips for Newborns:**

1. Follow age appropriate awake windows. These range from 40 minutes to 1.5hrs (see table below). Following awake windows means our baby is asleep by the end of their awake window. This includes their feed and nappy change.
2. Avoid over-tiredness and gas. Put baby to bed before their awake window. Help them expel gas by burping and using baby massage/bicycle legs.
3. Use the 5 S's for settling: Swaddling, Side Lying, Swinging and Sucking (see description).
4. If your baby is experiencing an unexplained crying episode, or witching hour, try these tips: 1. step outside and go for a walk in the fresh air (either in your arms, carrier or pram. 2. Skin on skin time. 3. Skin on skin time in a warm shower. 4. Play white noise or try The Happy Song by Imogen Heap.
5. Babies move between active and quiet sleep. Active sleep looks like this: their arms and legs move, their eyes flicker or stay open, they may look awake (they are not!). TIP: don't pick them up or move them. Wait and see if they go back to sleep. If they need help moving into the next sleep cycle, use the Shush Pat.

Bonus tip: Don't wake your sleeping baby. UNLESS: you are advised by a doctor, nurse or paediatrician to wake them for a feed. If they sleep longer than 4 hours in one nap during the day, speak to a medical professional.



### **Common issues for newborns:**

**Colic or Purple Crying:** Colic is often described as excessive, inconsolable crying in an otherwise healthy and well-fed baby. It typically starts around the second or third week of life and peaks at around six weeks, gradually resolving by the fourth. Colic is consistent with crying for long periods of time. If your baby is crying for more than 2-3 hours, every day for more than a few days, seek medical advice.

The exact cause of colic remains unknown, but factors such as gastrointestinal discomfort, oversensitivity, and immaturity of the nervous system may contribute. Colic can also be one of two serious conditions: GORD or GERD (gastro-esophageal reflux disease). Both of these have serious symptoms including: weight loss, bloody vomit, feeding difficulty and a few others. If your baby has these symptoms, they need to be seen by a doctor.

### **Tips for Soothing a Colicky Baby to Sleep:**

- **Create a de-stress zone:** When our babies experience Colic, their sympathetic nervous system is in hyperdrive. Let's calm their environment down by taking them to a space with white noise, low lights and minimal other people around will support them in feeling calm.
- **Swaddle or carrier:** Putting your little one in a swaddle or a carrier will help to activate their calm reflex. If the episode is happening indoors, take a stroll outside with them in the carrier. Often a change of scenery will support them in being distracted enough to calm down.
- **Skin on Skin:** Sometimes our babies need to go back to basics. Strip them off and get in the bath or shower with them. The loud shower noise will act like white noise and support them in calming down. Add in a bottle or a breast feed for an added calming effect.

# Settling

- **Establish a Consistent Bedtime Routine:** Start with a calming bedtime routine to signal to your baby that it's time to wind down. This may include a warm bath, gentle massage, or soft lullabies. Consistency is key, as it helps create a predictable environment for your baby.
- **Comfortable Sleeping Environment:** Ensure that your baby's sleep space is conducive to rest. Keep the room dark, quiet, and at a comfortable temperature. Soft, breathable bedding and a snug swaddle can provide a sense of security.
- **Feeding and Sleep:** Babies with colic can sometimes be overfed, causing issues within their stomach. This can create wind, causing them to become upset. So, let's offer them smaller feeds, making sure to keep them upright for at least 20 minutes to help with digestion. Allow them to sleep upright if they prefer this during the day. As soon as you need to go to sleep, put them in a safe sleeping environment on their backs.
- **Use White Noise:** White noise machines or apps can be effective in drowning out background sounds that might disturb your baby's sleep. The consistent, calming sound can create a soothing environment and help your baby relax.
- **Settling:** Babies that have colic can get discomfort settling on their backs. Settle them on their sides and once they are asleep, roll them back onto their backs.
- **Seek Professional Guidance:** If colic persists or intensifies, consider consulting with your paediatrician to rule out any underlying medical issues. A professional assessment can provide peace of mind and guide you in managing your baby's colic effectively.

# Settling

Colic can be a challenging phase for both parents and babies, but with patience, understanding, and the right strategies, it's possible to ease your little one into a more restful sleep routine.

As a sleep consultant, my aim is to empower parents with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate these difficult moments, fostering a peaceful and nurturing sleep environment for the whole family.

Remember, every baby is unique, so don't hesitate to adapt these tips to suit your baby's individual needs. Sweet dreams await!



# Trouble Shooting

## **4 Month Regression:**

The 4 month regression or progression can seem like a scary change in our little one's sleep, however, let me reassure you it is a great opportunity to fine tune and support sleep. This regression can happen anytime from 3-6 months.

This is a major milestone in your babies development! At this time their sleep becomes mature and more defined, which give you a fantastic chance to make some changes and get into a solid routine!

What you might expect from a 4 month sleep regression:

- Multiple night wakings
- Fussiness/irritability
- Cat napping

What to focus on:

- Establishing a routine
- Bedtime/Nap routines
- Establishing the sleep foundations
  - Environment (dark room, white noise - page 12)
  - Settling technique (stay consistent)(page 16 & 20)
  - Feeding (page 18)
  - Awake Windows and Routine (page 13)

Seek personalised support if you need a more tailored plan - we are here to support you.



# You got this!



**The Sleep Empire offers a wide range of services and consultation types to suit your family.**

**Reach out if you want to learn how we can support you**

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