



Coping Strategies



Adapting to life with a new baby can be challenging; especially since the early months usually include plenty of crying and regular sleep disruptions during the night. Here are some tips that can help you manage during this time:

Have realistic expectations.

It is normal and healthy for your baby to wake during the night and need to eat for the first 6 months or so. Your baby's sleep pattern and need for night feeding is likely to fluctuate as she goes through various stages and activities. Babies tend to be able to function quite well on fragmented and reduced sleep. Sleep deprivation is usually more of a parent problem at this early stage.

Don't worry about long-term sleep problems.

Many families worry that they are creating lifelong sleep problems because their child is not falling asleep (or back to sleep) without assistance or because naps and night time sleep are not ideal. These early months are not a time to worry about creating 'bad' habits. Many babies, whether they have good sleep habits or not, will still have a sleep regression around 4 months of age. Families that nurse, feed or comfort their babies to sleep will still be able to help their baby learn sleep skills when she is older. It is never too late; however it is easier to sleep coach before 17 months of age.

Naps – sleep when baby sleeps. (Or at least rest.)

You have probably already heard this, I'm sure. It's great advice, especially for the early weeks; however, many parents are unable to do this. If you have older children, responsibilities, or you just can't sleep during the day, try to at least sit or lie down for a while and just rest. Having a few minutes of rest can make a big difference to how you feel.

Go to bed when baby does in the evening.

Alter sleeping arrangements for better sleep.

Consider one parent sleeping in a separate room to maximize sleep.



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Tag-team parenting.

If it is an option, parents and caregivers can give each other some time off. Ideally each parent can get a minimum of 5.5 hours of sleep, even if it this period is broken up.

Get some help.

Ask for help from family or friends with meals, running errands, helping with laundry, older children, cleaning, etc. Consider having someone watch baby for a few hours so you can take a nap or get out to an exercise class or event. Even just having someone to talk to can provide much needed emotional support. Accept any offers of help, and consider making a list of what your needs are and posting it by the door for guests and family to see.

Paid Support – Parents can hire support for respite, help with baby, or around the house.

- Postpartum Doulas are trained specifically to support Mothers and nurture families in the first weeks and months, providing emotional support, education, and practical help. For more information: www.cappa.net, www.dona.org, www.Doulacare.ca (Canada)
- Baby Nurses & Newborn Care Specialists, Nannies, Night Nannies, & Babysitters. Check with both local and online agencies. Not all providers in this category will have formal training, however many have a great deal of experience.

Community Support.

Many community organizations offer support to families with babies. Contact your local churches, Mom's groups, Early Years Centers, Multiples groups, and local family centers for more information.

Co-Sleeping and Room-sharing.

Co-Sleeping at this age can help provide more sleep for the entire family and help anxious babies feel more comfortable in the right circumstances. Sharing a firm sleep surface with your baby is safer than sleeping together in a chair or on a sofa. Please review the safe co-sleeping guidelines if you are planning to co-sleep/bed share.

"This too shall pass."

Remember that with babies, everything will usually get better with time. Crying usually decreases after 4 months of age, naps and night sleep may improve at this point, too. However, if it doesn't your baby will eventually be old enough to learn long-term sleep skills., so hang in there!



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