



Gentle Sleep Strategies 4 – 6 Months



It's normal for babies to continue to need to feed at night at this age. Ask your Health Care Provider how much milk your baby needs at night – and remember to consider your own instincts, too. You can work on good sleep habits while maintaining feeds.

If you are managing well with your current situation, then it is fine to just keep doing what you are doing. You won't be creating any life-long sleep problems. Any habits that you don't want to become long-term can be corrected later on. Changing sleep habits does get a little more challenging starting at about 10 months of age, with the most challenging time being after 18 months, but it's still not impossible.

Around 4 months many babies go through an exciting and challenging developmental milestone that often affects sleep, feedings, and schedules in general. Because of these possible changes, this is not a good time to do sleep coaching – just do what you can to get through for 2-3 weeks.

Ensuring that your baby does not get over-tired will improve your his ability to fall asleep and stay asleep and improve his disposition.

Most babies this age can be awake for up to 2 hours at a time, with an average of 14.5 hours of combined daytime and nighttime sleep.

Gentle Sleep Strategies

- Respond to baby quickly so he will settle faster
- Maintain a regular feeding schedule during the day
- Be aware of baby's drowsy signs & cues
- Put baby to sleep before he is over-tired
- Respect daytime sleep
- Establish consistent yet flexible routines. For example: *feed-activity-sleep* or *feed-activity-feed-sleep*



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The information and advice on the Gentle Baby Solutions' site and handouts should not substitute for the advice of your family doctor or other trained healthcare professionals and is not intended to diagnose or treat your child. The content may not be relevant for children with health or developmental problems. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on this site.

- Daily exposure to outdoor light and fresh air
- Babywearing during the day can reduce crying and improve day/night sleep
- Maintain a “sleep-friendly” environment
- Use sight, sound, smell, and touch to create a familiar sleep sanctuary
- Try putting the baby down to bed drowsy but awake. It's okay to pick up if he cries
- Keep activities calm and relaxing in the evening and night interaction low key
- Try an earlier bedtime. Consider a time between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m.
- Create a calm, relaxing bedtime routine
- Consider a sleepy feed or dream feed
- Keep night feeds low key and lights dim
- Avoid diaper changes at night if at all possible
- If child is taking a bottle, parents or caregivers can rotate feedings
- Consider motion sleep if nothing else works (infant swings, strollers, car rides, infant carriers, etc.)
- **Remember: sleep crutches can be corrected!** In the first 6 months, you will not create life-long bad sleep habits by comforting or feeding your baby to sleep

Things to keep in mind about your baby's sleep:

✓ **Respond** and comfort your baby.

✓ **Offer regular feeds**, especially in the day.

✓ **Encourage daytime sleep** and try to keep your baby from getting over-tired.

X Never try to fill your baby up with more food than he wants or needs. This practice is unlikely to promote longer or better sleep and very likely to cause tummy discomfort and distress and in the long run. Overfeeding may result in children associating sleep with a very full tummy and a child becoming over weight.

X Don't use formula as a sleep aid. You may have heard that babies who are fed formula may sleep better, but this has not been proven. In fact, several studies conducted concluded that there is NO evidence that a Mother's sleep is improved with formula feeding or any combination of formula and breastfeeding compared to exclusive breastfeeding.



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X Don't stretch out daytime feeds to try to improve sleep. Despite suggestions in several parenting books, putting your baby on a feeding schedule or stretching out day feeds beyond 3 hour intervals will not improve your baby's sleep. Most humans need to eat or drink at least every 3 hours.

X Don't fall asleep with your baby on a sofa, chair or recliner. This is the most dangerous form of co-sleeping. Don't put yourself in a place where this is likely to happen. It would be better to lie on a firm mattress or even on the floor if you feel that you are likely to fall asleep with your baby.

X Don't share a bed with your baby if it is unsafe to do so. For more, please see these [Safe co-sleeping guidelines](#).

For more details and information on sleep expectations and how to improve sleep please visit the [Sleep Section](#).



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