
TEACHING YOUR INFANT TO SLEEP THROUGH THE NIGHT

- There is no “right” or “wrong” regarding your decision whether to teach your baby to sleep through the night (8-10 hours without getting picked up or fed).
- Most infants settle at bedtime best if there is an evening routine: for example: the “4 Bs”: Bath, Books, Breast (or Bottle), Bed (crib). If you are lucky, this routine alone will lead to your baby eventually sleep through the night.
- At the age of 6 months most infants can be taught to sleep through the night over a period of 3-6 nights. It is easiest to do at this age.



(istock photo)

The following method is sometimes referred to as “controlled comforting”:
Following the “4Bs” (Bath, Books, Breast or Bottle, Bed) routine:

1. Place your infant on her/his back, awake but sleepy.
2. Wish your baby a cheery goodnight and leave the room. If your infant cries (not just whimpers): wait, then return to the room at increasing intervals (e.g. 2,4,6,8, minutes), say the same cheery words, and leave. Do not pick up your infant (ideally, do not provide any sleep aide like music or a pacifier as you want your baby to learn how to fall asleep without any external assistance).
3. During the night, each time your infant awakens, if he/she begins to cry, wait a few minutes, then return at increasing intervals (as outlined above) until your pre-determined “pick up time” (typically 5:30/6:00 a.m.).
4. Repeat same steps every night. Each night will improve 😊

Additional tips:

- Only do this sleep training when your baby is not sick.
- If you find that your baby is on the verge of falling asleep and that going into the room at the planned interval unsettles him/her, delay going into the room.

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- You may need to re-teach your baby to sleep through the night:
 - After baby's illness.
 - After disruption of routine (for example after a vacation).
- Will be quicker second time around (pew!).
- For infants that started to sleep through the night on their own, a time may come when they go "off track" and need a mini-course!
- Older siblings will usually sleep through the infant's crying.

Will my baby will be hungry in the night?

- Your baby will easily and quickly "catch -up" in the day.
- Feeding at night is just a habit that the baby has had no "motivation" to change.
- Letting your child experience hunger is not starving your child (even though it feels that way).

Might it harm my baby's development?

- Studies have shown that there is no evidence of any harm.
- Consider the number of hours of sleep teaching compared with the thousands of hours of attentive responses and bonding time (would it make sense that 3-6 nights of this sleep teaching technique would leave long lasting harmful effects?).
- Does your child appear traumatized after the first night? (actually, your child will often appear better rested).

Might it benefit my baby's development?

- Sleep deprivation is a known risk factor for parental depression and parental depression can be harmful for a child's development.
- Infants that learn to sleep through the night develop healthier sleep patterns as children and adults.

