

Getting used to life with a new baby can be hard! Knowing what to expect about your baby's sleep can help. Every baby is different, and their sleep will change as they grow. How your baby sleeps will affect how much sleep you get. Watching for your baby's sleep cues and starting bedtime routines at an early age can help them sleep better. This guide gives you tips on how your baby's sleep will change in the first six months and what you can do to help.

## Fast Facts: birth to six months

### Babies may:

- Rub their eyes, yawn, or fuss when they are tired
- Move between sleep states of active sleep to quiet sleep more quickly than adults
- Wake up more often than adults
- Need to eat often, even at night, and wake up if they are hungry
- Change their sleep patterns as they grow and their brain develops
- Find it easier or harder to fall asleep and stay asleep, depending on their age and temperament.

### Caregivers can:

- Learn their baby's sleep cues and what helps or stops them from getting better sleep
- Start a simple pre-sleep routine
- Wait a few minutes before going to their baby to see if they settle into a new sleep state
- Try resting when your baby naps, if possible
- Pay attention to baby's needs - help them settle down when they're tired or feed them when they're hungry
- Be flexible and patient, as baby's sleep will change as they grow.

### Did you know?

Babies start to notice daytime and nighttime patterns around two to three months of age. This happens because their bodies begin to change the levels of cortisol and melatonin, which are hormones that help control sleep. Before this, newborns can sleep at any time, depending on how long they've been awake. After this pattern develops, babies will sleep longer at night and stay awake more during the day. To help this process, keep the sleeping area dim at night when feeding your baby and make their daytime space bright and cheerful. If you can, let natural sunlight into your home during the day.



## How sleep patterns develop

### In the first three months, babies might:

- Sleep 14 to 17 hours each day
- Wake up often, both day and night
- Sleep for two to four hours at a time
- Start each sleep in active sleep state and might wake up easily
- Go into quiet sleep after 20 to 30 minutes
- Twitch, make small movements, make sounds and startle easily while in active sleep or when moving between active and quiet sleep
- Need you to calm them if they get upset.

### From four to six months, babies might:

- Sleep 12 to 16 hours each day
- Start each sleep in a quiet sleep state
- Produce melatonin, a hormone that will help them fall asleep at nighttime
- Sleep for longer periods during the night
- Stay awake longer during the day
- Nap three times each day around the same time
- Have regular daytime routines of eating, playing and sleeping
- Connect pre-sleep routines with going to sleep.



- Newborns spend the first 20 to 30 minutes of sleep in active sleep and might wake up easily if you try to lay them down. If your newborn has fallen asleep outside of their sleep space, wait until they move into quiet sleep before putting them down to help avoid waking them up.
- At around four months of age, try laying your baby down for sleep when their cues show they are in a drowsy state and allow them to fall asleep on their own.
- If you hear your baby make noise or they begin to move around while sleeping, try waiting a few minutes before going to them to see if they settle into a new sleep state.
- Babies sleep best when the temperature is comfortable, not too hot and not too cold, and when their sleep space is calm.

## Responding to baby's sleep cues

Your baby may have early sleep cues and may show you they are getting tired when they:	When your baby shows early sleep cues respond by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rub their eyes</li> <li>• Yawn</li> <li>• Startle easily</li> <li>• Open and close their eyes slowly</li> <li>• Have a "dull" or "heavy lidded look" to their face and eyes.</li> </ul>	Ending the activity you are doing together
	Taking the baby to a quiet, calm space, if you can
	Speaking quietly, calmly, and in a soothing voice
	Lowering the lights in the baby's sleep space, if possible

Responding to your baby's early sleep cues quickly will make it easier for them to fall asleep and help prevent them from becoming overtired.

Crying can be a late sleep cue that occurs after the early sleep cues were not responded to.

**To learn more about baby cues, speak to a public health nurse.**

## Pre-sleep routines

When babies are about three months old, they start to link their pre-sleep, or “bedtime” routines with sleeping. Start your baby’s pre-sleep routine when they show signs that they are tired. Keep this routine the same every night and for every person who cares for the baby. The routine should last 20 to 30 minutes, and you can use a shorter version for nap time.

### Choose relaxing activities that your baby enjoys, like:

- Giving a gentle massage
- Changing their diaper and dressing them in sleepwear
- Sharing a story together
- Singing a soothing song
- Placing baby in their sleep area and saying, “good night”.

## Take care of yourself

After having a baby, taking care of yourself might look different, but it’s still very important. Focus on your own well-being, rest, and sleep before worrying about things like cooking and cleaning.

Here are some ideas on how to do it:

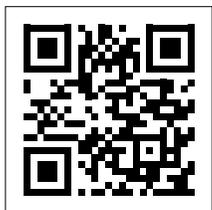
- Eat well, exercise, and find time to relax
- Adjust your sleep schedule to match your baby’s bedtime
- Rest when your baby naps, if you can
- Be flexible with your daily routines
- Ask family and friends for help so you can take care of yourself and your baby
- Give yourself a break when you need it.



**If you feel overwhelmed, put your baby in a safe place, like a crib, and take a short break.**

## Learn more

[www.hpph.ca/sleep](http://www.hpph.ca/sleep)



## Need help?

If you think that your baby is sick and it is affecting their sleep, talk to your healthcare provider.

Your baby is unique. If these tips are not helping, connect with your local public health unit or your healthcare provider.

## Additional support

Huron Perth Public Health  
Healthy Babies Healthy Children program  
1-888-221-2133 ext 3575  
[hbcintake@hpph.ca](mailto:hbcintake@hpph.ca)  
[www.hpph.ca/hbhc](http://www.hpph.ca/hbhc)