

## A Guide to Your Baby's Sleep and Settling in the First 12 Months

*There is an enormous adjustment for new parents when a baby is born. Your previously predictable and organised day is suddenly disrupted by the newborn, whose needs are immediate and constant. Baby's patterns develop at different ages and stages and are always changing as they grow. These developing patterns revolve around your baby's needs of feeding, quiet time and getting to know them, comforting, bathing, settling and sleep. An overview of age appropriate patterns from birth to one year follows:*

### First few weeks

- unpredictable and irregular feeding and sleeping times
- minimum 6 feeds, often more in a 24 hour period
- 1 to 2 unsettled periods in a 24 hour cycle which may last 2 to 3 hours.
- baby may not sleep from one feed to the next and may require frequent feeding
- playtime is very short and involves cuddling, comforting and talking to your baby
- by 3 to 4 weeks baby is becoming more wakeful and alert
- baby focuses on faces rather than their surroundings, so hold your baby close to you and talk to them

### 6 to 12 weeks

- a pattern begins to emerge, you are more confident in recognising and managing baby's needs
- usually 5 to 8 milk feeds in 24 hrs
- 2 to 3 alert playtimes of ½ hour each after feeds
- baby is now following your face and smiles

### 3 to 4 months

- generally baby has established a pattern of waking then play then feed then play then sleep
- usually 5 to 6 milk feeds in 24 hrs, feeding times are shorter, they become more efficient at sucking and are easily distracted whilst feeding
- becoming more socially aware and much more interested in their surroundings
- 2 to 3 playtimes during the day of about 1 hour, after which they will need to sleep for 1 to 2 hours
- if your baby is sleeping in a bassinet its time to put baby into the cot

### 4 to 6 months

- a more structured day, baby's pattern is more predictable, and they are developing a sense of security with their parents, knowing that their parents recognise their needs
- usually 4 to 6 milk feeds in 24 hrs
- baby is often awake for two hours and asleep for two hours during the day. For one period in 24 hrs they sleep for a longer period of time
- play time is about 1 ½ hrs three times a day, and is more active, with baby playing on the floor most of the time
- baby will be attempting to move by rolling over, and using their hands to reach and hold objects

### 6 to 9 months

- usually 4 to 5 milk feeds in 24 hrs
- solid foods commence at around 6 months in addition to milk feeds
- two sleeps of about 1 to 2 hours and a catnap during the day. The majority of babies will sleep from late evening to early morning
- often baby shows signs of tiredness but resists settling and often fights sleep
- play is 1 ½ hrs three times a day and baby is more mobile, playing on the floor, crawling about, becoming more assertive and talkative

### 9 to 12 months

- by 9 months babies usually have 3 to 4 milk feeds after 3 solid meals a day
- by 12 months babies usually have 3 meals a day of family foods with 3 to 4 milk feeds afterwards
- baby likes finger food, having their own spoon, actively participating in feeding themselves, making a mess with their food, and enjoy learning to drink from a cup
- meals are a social occasion, so it is important to sit down and talk to your baby while they are eating
- morning and afternoon sleep of 1 to 2 hours each, followed often by longer period of active play
- around 12 months is a period of transition to toddlerhood. Babies are busy, mobile, interested in everything, and put everything in their mouth
- babies can become distressed when their parent disappears from sight so always talk to your baby as you move in and out of the room during playtime

# SETTLING

Learning to settle your baby to sleep in the first few months can take time, and is facilitated by a calm and consistent approach. Each baby's need for sleep will differ. As parents gain confidence with their baby, settling time becomes easier. Babies, like adults, develop sleep associations. They rely on familiar cues for settling to sleep. Remember, a settling technique is not to put the baby to sleep, but to calm them in preparation for sleep so they can learn to go to sleep by themselves. At night use dim lighting, not bright lights as babies do not need a play time. Just a feed, nappy change, quick burp and back to bed.

In the first weeks after the baby has been fed spend a brief period of quiet play, cuddling and talking to each other. Around 3 weeks when baby becomes more alert, during the day, start a feeding, play then settling to sleep pattern which can be easily continued in the months to come. After the baby has been fed, spend a brief period of quiet play, talking and getting to know each other. When you recognise the signs of tiredness, eg fist clenching, jerky movement, facial grimaces, grizzling then:

- pick your baby up, talking gently to him and remove your baby from the activity area
- create a quiet sleeping environment, away from the general household activities. To reduce stimulation close the blinds and/or curtains. Next change baby's nappy if needed
- wrap the baby, keeping the clothing and wrap away from baby's face to avoid stimulating the rooting/sucking reflex. Babies benefit by being wrapped when being put to bed to prevent the startling reflex from further disturbing baby. It may appear that your baby does not like their arms being wrapped

in, but this will make them feel secure and contained which will help them to settle. The more baby moves and thrashes in bed, the more difficult it is to get them to sleep. Wrapping is helpful until around 4 months when baby loses the startle reflex and gains conscious hand movement. After this baby will enjoy having their hands free and will be learning to self settle

- after wrapping, give them a cuddle
- watch for signs of settling such as eyelids closing, and the body relaxing **then**
- put baby in their cot even though they may not be asleep. Remember to put baby on to their back to sleep. Sometimes, babies may grizzle whilst unwinding, before relaxing and going off to sleep. Listen to your baby. If they become distressed, attend and comfort them and resettle in the room using your settling techniques.

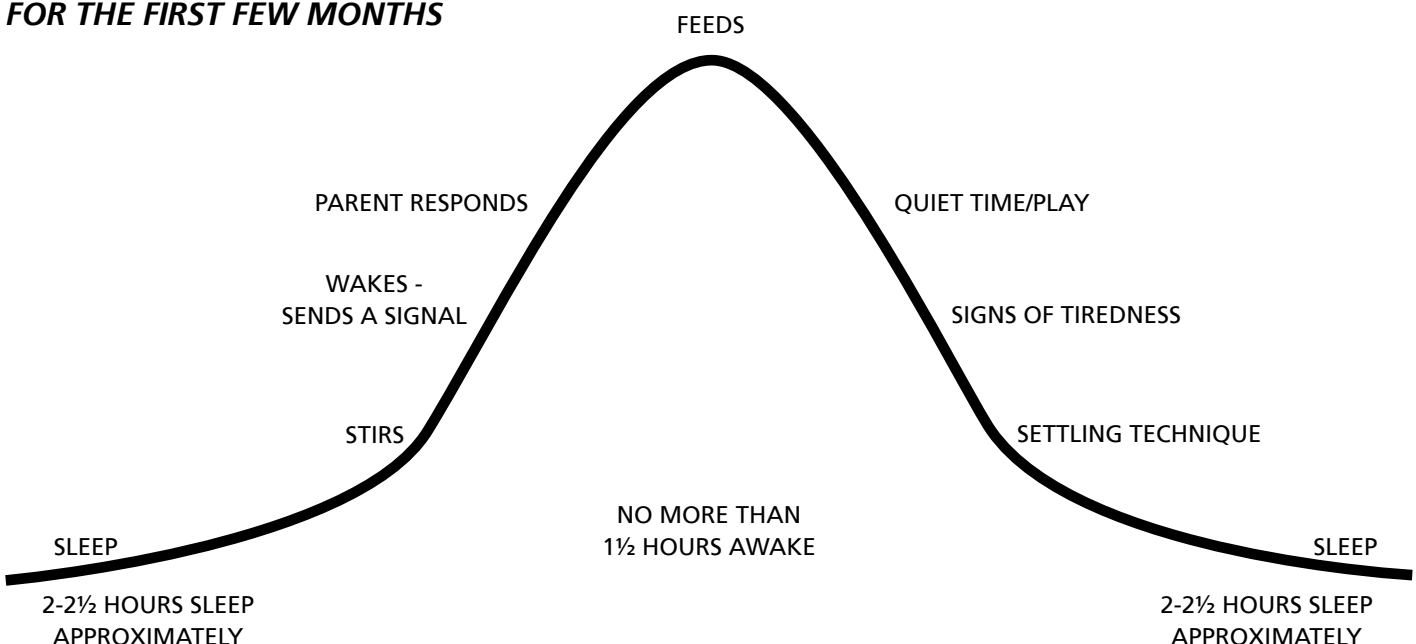
Continue this process until your baby settles to sleep. Settling can be assisted by:

- wrapping snugly
- cuddling and rocking gently, or
- talking, singing softly and gently
- gentle rhythmical patting (slowing down gradually)
- playing relaxing music

Fathers and other familiar adults can share this settling routine. If your baby is still unsettled, it may be helpful to try one or more of the following:

- carrying baby in a pouch
- a walk in the pram, outdoors if possible
- extra sucking, eg dummy
- a warm bath and/or a relaxing massage

## FEED – PLAY – SLEEP CYCLE FOR THE FIRST FEW MONTHS



## SLEEP

Brief wakeful periods during baby's sleep times are normal. They go through light and deep phases of sleep in cycles of 40 to 60 minutes. Often they will resettle back to sleep if left undisturbed. If there are signs of distress you will need to attend to your baby and help them resettle back to sleep. If your baby is not sleeping well they will become irritable, may not feed properly and will become increasingly more difficult.

Sometimes babies can develop a dependence on always being fed, rocked continuously or being held in someone's arms to go to sleep. Over time, this may be a problem for some parents and the baby will have difficulty adjusting to settling alone. However, when parents are consistent in their settling techniques, baby will learn to recognise sleep-time cues and will feel more secure and settle happily in their own time. Also, around 6 to 9 months, night waking may occur as the mobile baby wakes themselves with their movements. If they are unable to resettle themselves you may need to help them learn how to self-settle.

## CRYING

Mother and baby have been one for nine months. Birth is a major separation for mother and baby and it may take them time to adjust to their new environment. A newborn cries to be near and close to you. Young babies respond and feel safe when cuddled and comforted especially by their mother. Often just the separation from their mother's arms causes baby to cry. Crying is one way baby communicates with you. It may take you many weeks to understand their crying. Some other reasons for crying include hunger, hot or cold, wet and/or dirty, uncomfortable, tired or needing help to settle.

Periods of crying may total 2 to 4 hours per day. The settling techniques previously listed can be helpful. If your baby's crying becomes distressing for you and you are unable to comfort them, place them safely in the cot and take a short break away from your baby to gather your thoughts or phone someone for support. By 4 months, most babies are more settled with less distressed crying time. Your confidence will increase as you have learnt to understand your baby's needs. Remember to accept all offers of practical help and support from family and friends during the early months.

Crying in healthy babies is difficult for parents to understand and sometimes may be labelled "colic", "reflux", "wind", "lactose intolerance" or a "feeding problem". About 20 to 30 per cent of babies cry for no apparent reason. Sometimes medicines are recommended for baby however not all babies respond to this treatment. Always consult a health professional before giving medicine to your baby. If breastfeeding and your baby is unsettled, consider your caffeine intake or medications and discuss this with your Child Health Nurse or Doctor.

## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND ADVICE

If you continue to be concerned by your baby's crying, unsettled behaviour or sleep difficulties, seek assistance from your Child Health Nurse at the Early Childhood Health Centre, 24 hours parenting help lines listed in your baby's Personal Health Record Book or your doctor.

# A GUIDE TO YOUR BABY'S DAY

AGE	FEEDING	PLAYTIME	SLEEP
0-7 / 8 Weeks	5-9 Times a day	Brief Playtime 2-3 Times a day	16-18 hours in 24 hours
2-3 Months	5-6 Times a day	1/2 hour-1 hour 2-3 Times a day	15-18 hours in 24 hours
3-4 Months	4-5 Times a day	1 hour 2-3 Times a day	15-16 hours in 24 hours
4-6 Months	Milk 4 Times a day & solids	1 1/2 hours 3 Times a day	15 hours in 24 hours
6-9 Months	Milk 3-4 Times a day & 2-3 solids	1 1/2 hours 3 Times a day Busy & getting mobile	14-15 hours in 24 hours
9-12 Months	Milk 3 Times a day & 3 meals & snacks	Very Busy	12-14 hours in 24 hours