

How Much Sleep Baby Needs

WANT TO BE SURE BABY'S GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP? FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES.

All babies are different, of course, but here are some general sleep guidelines, according to Kira Ryan, coauthor of *The Dream Sleeper: A Three-Part Plan for Getting Your Baby to Love Sleep*. As you'll see the suggested amount of [sleep baby needs](#) changes as he or she grows.

0 to 4 months

In that first month, baby may get up to 20 hours of sleep a day, waking only for short periods of [time to feed](#). Over the next couple of months, baby will need about 15 to 18 hours of sleep a day—that's at least eight hours at night and seven during the day, spread over three naps.

4 to 6 months

Baby now needs slightly less shuteye—about 15 hours a day. Increase nighttime sleep to 11 to 12 hours, and [reduce naps](#) to three to four hours altogether, spread over three naps.

6 to 12 months

Baby needs about 14.5 hours of sleep a day, with about 11 to 12 during the night. The other two to three-and-a-half hours should come during two naps.

12 to 18 months

By now, baby will sleep about 14 hours a day—11 to 12 hours overnight, and one-and-a half to three hours during the day. Many babies switch from two naps to one during this time.

18 to 36 months

Nighttime sleep stays put at 11 to 12 hours. Most toddlers take one nap of about one-and-a-half to three hours.

Plus more from The Bump, [Baby Bedtime Infographic](#):

BABY BEDTIME

TIPS FOR SAFE + SOUND SLEEP

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: the **BUMP**

CRIB SAFETY 101

Baby sleeps on his back.

Use a fitted sheet.
Mattress meets CPSC safety standards.
Minimal gap between mattress and crib.

REMOVE IT

Toys

Bumpers

Blankets

THE RIGHT ROUTINE

UNDER 6 MONTHS
Baby should sleep in your room in a separate bassinet.

OVER 6 MONTHS
Try 1 nap per day in nursery.

AFTER 4 MONTHS

Try self-soothing by not picking baby up right away when she wakes.

COMFY BABY

COOL IT
Best temperature for sleeping is:
69°F - 73°F

SKIP IT
NO Blankets

SUIT IT
If past swaddle stage, a sleep suit will keep baby warm.

ADD IT
White noise machine

DIM IT
Lower the lights.

Sources: Consumer Product Safety Commission, American Academy of Pediatrics.

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How Can I Help Baby Sleep?

I KNOW BABY'S SUPPOSED TO GET UP OFTEN TO FEED IN THE BEGINNING, BUT HOW CAN I SET HER UP TO START SLEEPING LONGER STRETCHES WHEN SHE'S READY?

Every baby is different, but there are definitely some ways to maximize your chances of catching some z's. Give yourself and baby some much-needed snoozetime with these easy tips.

Clear the Clutter

Make sure the nursery is designated as a room for sleep. Keep the area around the crib free of toys and other fun knickknacks. "Crib distractions confuse your baby," says Conner Herman, coauthor of *The Dream Sleeper: A Three-Part Plan for Getting Your Baby to Love Sleep*. "They'll make him wonder, 'Is this a playpen, or is it time to sleep?'" Clearing the space will help your baby mentally associate the bedroom with sleeping and other rooms with playing.

Start Separating

Though it may go against your natural instinct, Kira Ryan, Herman's coauthor and business partner, recommends putting baby in her own room for at least one nap a day from the start. "This gets her acclimated to her room, so when it's time to move in there, it's not a total change." A daily solo nap also helps baby and you get used to being apart — these little breaks may be tough, but they're healthy and necessary. Even if baby sleeps in your room, Herman recommends putting up a screen or partition for a little separation. "If baby wakes up during the night and sees you, it's easy for him to rely on you to fall back asleep." And you'll all be happy later if baby's able to put himself back to bed.

Stay Cool

Baby sleeps best when the temperature is consistent and cool. "Most moms actually keep the nursery too warm," says Ryan. Try to keep the room temperature between 68 and 72 degrees. Putting your crib in the right spot is also essential. "Pick a location that isn't in the direct pathway of your air conditioning or heating vents," says Herman. Sudden temperature changes can startle and disturb baby. Also, keep the crib away from windows to protect baby from drafts and outside noise.

Dim the Lights

Forget the nightlights — babies aren't likely to fear the dark until at least 18 months. In fact, cut out all the extra light you can, since light signals daytime to baby. "On a scale of one to five, five being pitch black, your baby's room should be a four," says Herman. Get yourself an extra hour of sleep by putting vinyl blackout curtains behind decorative drapes. Also, scan the room for anything shiny. A clock, baby monitor, or flashy toy could catch baby's eye and wake him up, so cover these objects or turn them around. If baby's a nighttime nurser, attach a dimmer switch to a lamp and turn it on and off slowly for nighttime feedings.

Soothe with Sound

What baby hears (or doesn't) is just as important as what she does or doesn't see. Pick up a white noise machine to cancel out house noise, cars, and other distracting sounds (just don't turn it so high it could hurt baby's sensitive ears). Baby will begin to associate the constant and consistent sound with sleep. Some noise machines have lullaby, ocean, or other sound options, but simple white noise is fine — it'll bring baby back to being in the womb, and really, what's more soothing than memories of mommy's belly? Look for a portable machine so you'll be able to recreate the sounds of the nursery while you're away from home.

How to Transition Baby to His Own Room

HAVING BABY SLEEP CLOSE BY IS A SOURCE OF COMFORT FOR BOTH OF YOU, BUT AT SOME POINT YOU'LL NEED TO TRANSITION HIM OUT OF YOUR ROOM AND INTO HIS OWN. HERE'S THE SEAMLESS WAY TO DO IT.

Chances are, your newborn will start out sleeping in your room. Not only is it considered the safest place for baby—and an ideal way to build that parent-child bond—it's also convenient to have him close by for all those late-night feedings. But at some point, you're going to want to reclaim your space. Which brings us to the key question: When to move baby to his own room? Here, experts explain how to know when your child is ready for the big switch, plus tips for transitioning baby to the crib.

In this article:

[When to move baby to his own room](#)

[How to tell if baby is ready for her own room](#)

[Tips for moving baby to his own room](#)

WHEN TO MOVE BABY TO HIS OWN ROOM

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, babies should sleep in their parents' room—but not in the same bed—for at least the first six months of life, ideally for the whole year, to reduce the risk of [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome](#) (SIDS) by as much as 50 percent. Exactly why room-sharing dramatically lowers the likelihood of SIDS is still unclear, but it's thought that having other people in the room makes baby sleep more lightly, possibly leading to a reduced risk. Keeping baby within mom's reach also makes it easier to breastfeed, which, in and of itself, has been shown to slash the risk of SIDS by 70 percent.

Keeping baby in your bedroom for those first 12 months can also help boost your bond. "The parent-child relationship is greatly enhanced by allowing the child to sleep in your room as long as possible," says S. Daniel Ganjian, MD, a pediatrician at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, California. Baby learns he can count on you to be there as he adjusts to life outside the womb, he explains, and is comforted by the sounds of your breathing.

That said, a year is a long time, and it's understandable—and totally okay—if you're ready to move baby into her own room before then, says Ashanti Woods, MD, a pediatrician at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore. "Every baby is different, and sometimes pediatricians recommend taking into account what's best for *everybody* in the family," he says.

[Pam Edwards](#), a certified infant and child sleep consultant, agrees. "It really comes down to what works best for your family dynamic," she says, pointing out that she's helped families transition babies to their own rooms at 4, 6 and 12 months, and even later. Babies tend to become more alert and aware of their surroundings after 6 months, so the process can be more challenging after that age, she says, but "it's by no means impossible."

HOW TO TELL IF BABY IS READY FOR HER OWN ROOM

If you want to wait until the 12-month mark before transitioning baby to the crib, great! But if you're ready to move baby before then, keep a few things in mind.

First, check with your pediatrician to make sure baby is growing well and doesn't need middle-of-the-night feedings, Ganjian says. Another sign your child may be ready for the move? If she can roll over from her belly to her back, he says.

How long baby can sleep in a stretch matters too, Woods says. "If the baby is waking up every two, three or four hours, he might not be ready to move to the nursery," he says. "If the baby can sleep for six hours or more, it's a great time to consider shipping the baby out." Even if he's a great sleeper, consider logistics carefully. It's important to be in close proximity to baby during the night so you can get to him quickly if something seems off, Woods says. If your bedroom and baby's nursery are on the opposite sides of the house, you might want to wait the 12 months before moving baby into his own room.

TIPS FOR MOVING BABY TO HIS OWN ROOM

First, it's important to set up baby's room for safe sleep. That means having a crib with a firm mattress and a fitted sheet, and keeping it completely clear of bumpers, toys and blankets. Becky Roosevelt, founder of [Snug as a Bug Pediatric Sleep Consulting](#), also recommends having blackout window shades and a white noise machine.

Once everything is in place, start transitioning baby to the crib by having him take naps in the nursery to get him comfortable with sleeping in the new space, Woods says. Once he gets the hang of that, have baby sleep in his own room overnight. To help keep an eye on your little one, Woods recommends having a good [video baby monitor](#) that allows you to see and hear your child from any point in the house.

Having a sleep routine and sticking to it is essential for a smooth transition, Roosevelt says. She recommends going into the room for a diaper change, dimming the lights and reading a story, then turning the lights off and singing a lullaby while rocking baby to the point of drowsiness. Finally, put baby into the crib slowly and with a smile, and leave the room. "These cues are key to helping baby know that sleep is coming next and that it will be taking place in this cozy room," she explains.

If you're a little freaked out about your little one sleeping on her own, it's fine for you to stay in baby's room for the first few nights, Edwards says. But try not to stress about how baby is doing: Edwards says moving baby to her own room is often harder on the parents than on the child. If you try transitioning baby to the crib and it just doesn't go well, it's okay to move baby back to your room and try again in a month or so. "Don't get discouraged," Woods says. "Just because you didn't get it at six months doesn't mean you won't get it at seven months."

When it comes to moving baby to his own room, remember that he's pretty resilient. "Even if we have a few tough nights, your child will learn to love his new sleep space if you give him that opportunity," Edwards says. "Having your own room back won't be so bad either."

Updated December 2017

Is It Okay for Babies to Sleep on Their Stomach?

WE GET IT: THERE'S THE CONSTANT WORRY OF BABY ROLLING ONTO HER BELLY WHILE SHE SLEEPS. HERE'S THE 411 ON KEEPING BABY SAFE.

New parents get lots of information thrown at them when it comes to baby sleep, but among the most important pieces of advice is about baby sleep positions. Is putting baby to sleep on her back really best, or can she sleep on her tummy? And what happens, despite your best efforts, if you wake up in the middle of the night to find baby sleeping on her stomach? Here's what you need to know so you and baby can rest peacefully.

In this article:

[Is it okay for babies to sleep on their stomach?](#)

[At what age can babies sleep on their stomach?](#)

[What to do if baby rolls onto stomach while sleeping](#)

IS IT OKAY FOR BABIES TO SLEEP ON THEIR STOMACH?

The short answer is no. Baby sleeping on stomach equals baby breathing in less air. This increases her chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome [SIDS](#). About 1,600 babies died of SIDS in 2015, the last year statistics were available. That's why baby shouldn't sleep on her side either: She can easily roll onto her stomach.

The best and only position for baby to sleep is the back—which the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends through baby's first year. Sleeping on the back improves airflow. While some parents are concerned that this might increase the risk of choking, they shouldn't be, says Deborah Campbell, MD, FAAP, chief of the division of neonatology at Children's Hospital at Montefiore in the Bronx, New York. "The baby's airway anatomy and gag reflex will keep that from happening," she says. Even babies with [gastroesophageal reflux](#) (GERD) should sleep on their back. This goes for naps *and* bedtime, and it's important to be consistent.

When, in 1994, the National Institutes of Health launched the "Back to Sleep" campaign (now known as "[Safe to Sleep](#)")—which educated parents and caregivers about why infants should be put to sleep on their backs—the number of SIDS-related deaths dropped within six years by 50 percent, to current levels.

AT WHAT AGE CAN BABIES SLEEP ON THEIR STOMACH?

So when is it safe to have a stomach sleeping baby? Pediatricians recommend not until after his first birthday. Typically at this stage, babies are able to sit without support and can roll from back to front. "This requires good head and trunk control," says Campbell, and it suggests that baby is strong enough to roll back to safety if he needs to.

WHAT TO DO IF BABY ROLLS ONTO STOMACH WHILE SLEEPING

You've done your part and put baby to sleep on her back. But as every new mom knows—no matter how exhausted you are—you can't help but wake up in the middle of the night to make adjustments should you find baby sleeping on her stomach.

The good news is, depending on baby's age, you might not need to do that. If your child is around 6 months old and has good head and trunk control (which he probably does, if he rolls over a lot), then "it's not necessary to turn baby over onto his back," Campbell says. (Of course, if you happen to be up, sure, go ahead and adjust him.)

But not all babies wait until the six-month mark to roll over; some as young as 3 or 4 months can turn onto their stomachs while they're sleeping. If this is the case, Campbell advises gently turning baby onto her back. The following tips can also help keep baby safe throughout the night:

- Encourage lots of tummy playtime when he's awake, so he has plenty of practice moving onto his back by himself while you're able to supervise him.
- Keep the crib clear of toys and blankets (unless you're [swaddling](#)) and keep the bedding tight. Loose blankets can increase the risks of SIDS.
- Use a firm crib mattress and make sure it meets [safety standards](#).
- Stay away from wedges or pillows, Campbell says, unless your pediatrician recommends them (in which case, she'll advise placing them *under* the mattress).
- Remember, once a baby attempts to roll or turn over, it's important to stop swaddling the baby," Campbell says.

Updated September 2017

How to Deal With the Baby Witching Hour

DON'T BE SCARED! A FUSSY BABY AT NIGHT IS TOTALLY NORMAL—AND WE'VE GOT EXPERT-APPROVED TRICKS THAT'LL SOOTHE YOURS LIKE A CHARM.

Whether Halloween is around the corner or months away, the witching hour—that chunk of time at night when an otherwise content baby starts fussing incessantly—will undoubtedly haunt many a new mom.

What's especially scary is that the baby witching hour always seems to coincide with when you're most tired: It hits when you're sleeping or just starting to relax after dinner. The good news? If your little ghoul is healthy and doing well otherwise, her witching hour days are numbered—we promise. Read on for tips on how to get through the worst of a fussy baby at night.

In this article:

[What is the witching hour?](#)

[When is the witching hour?](#)

[When do babies grow out of the witching hour?](#)

[Tips for dealing with baby witching hour](#)

WHAT IS THE WITCHING HOUR?

According to European folklore (and Shakespeare, who wrote about “witching time” in *Hamlet*), the witching hour was coined for the hour between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. when the Catholic church didn’t have any prayers or services going on—an optimal time for evil spirits to materialize. While the phrase can be used to describe any random span of bad luck, it lends itself really well to newborn babies, older than 3 weeks of age, who get fussy at a certain time of day on a regular basis for seemingly no reason. (Newborns just a couple of weeks old haven’t learned their day/night cycles yet and so aren’t prone to a specific witching hour.)

“From a medical point of view, the idea spans a few different things,” says Andrew Bernstein, MD, a pediatrician in private practice in Evanston, Illinois. It could apply to a baby with [colic](#)—defined as a baby, usually 3 to 12 weeks old, who’s thriving but is crying for more than three hours a day, more than three days a week and for at least three weeks. The time of day a colicky baby tends to act up can be referred to as the witching hour.

The witching hour can also apply to “babies that might not have colic but who are fussy in the evenings,” Bernstein says. “They’ve been overstimulated, they don’t know how to settle down [and] they don’t know how to self-soothe, so they need to scream and let it go.” (In other words, they do what we moms *want* to do at the end of the day.)

WHEN IS THE WITCHING HOUR?

There may be some colicky—but otherwise healthy—babies who cry for an extended period of time at *any* point in the day, but typically the breakdowns happen in the evening after dinner, between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. That’s when babies are extra tired, but because their nervous system hasn’t fully matured, and they don’t know how to put themselves to sleep, they lose it.

The evening is also when most significant others are coming home from work, and maybe you’re inadvertently keeping baby up so your partner can be with him. Remember that infants are hypersensitive to all the new sounds and activities going on around them—the crying is sometimes a sign that baby just wants to be wrapped up and held close.

Breastfed babies may have an additional reason to cry during the evening witching hour: “Your prolactin levels drop, [so] you’re making less milk,” says Meigan Alexander, a certified lactation consultant and owner of [BettyRuth Baby](#), a new-mom concierge service in Charlotte, North Carolina. When babies want more milk but it’s not coming fast enough, they can get frustrated as the milk release slows down. By crying, “babies are doing what they need to do to get what they need—being upset is a baby’s way of asking [for what they want]; they don’t have another way to express it,” Alexander explains.

WHEN DO BABIES GROW OUT OF THE WITCHING HOUR?

There’s not necessarily a specific age when babies grow out of fussing at night, but Bernstein says that after about 2 to 4 months of age, you may have an easier time preventing baby from getting overtired, which, in turn, would eventually ward off the witching hour. At this point, “you can do some sort of [sleep training](#); that’s when babies can start recognizing patterns and start to learn self-soothing,” he says. “At about 6 months old, most babies are happy getting 12 hours of sleep at night without needing a feeding. Part of the witching hour is recognizing that sometimes babies just need to go to sleep around 6 or 8 at night.”

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH BABY WITCHING HOUR

Once you've ruled out any medical conditions that may be causing your baby to cry—a protein allergy or intolerance or [baby reflux](#) are two common infant ailments—there are some time-tested ways to soothe a fussy baby at night.

- **Let baby sleep.** Give her the chance to get in as much shut-eye during the day, since an overtired baby has a harder time falling asleep at night.
- **Take baby to a quiet, dark room.** By limiting stimulation when he's upset, baby will have an easier time calming down. A white noise machine or app may help too.
- **Re-create the womb.** [Swaddle](#) baby and sway with or rock him. This will feel familiar and comforting to him.
- **Snuggle.** Skin-to-skin contact lets baby smell you—it's like aromatherapy for babies!
- **Nurse baby as much as she wants.** Because you're making milk at a slower pace late in the day, she'll want to feed for longer before she feels satisfied.
- **Start—and stick to—a bedtime regimen.** You can start with a bath and end with a book or lullaby. Eventually, baby will come to expect the routine and feel calmed by it.
- **Ask for help.** Be gracious to yourself—and baby—and ask for support. “Tag team and make sure you and your partner are taking care of each other and each getting time apart from the baby,” Bernstein says. “One parent can go take a walk while the other deals with [baby for] as long as he or she can handle it.” After all, you're probably a lot better at calming baby when you're calm yourself.

Updated November 2017