



Sleeping and Baby Feeding

Your body has spent your entire pregnancy growing another human being. During that time, you assume you will be losing sleep once your baby is here. Until you are in the moment, it is hard to understand just how mentally and physically exhausting caring for a baby can be. Though exhausting, it is worth it for the moments of peace exchanged between you and your baby during feedings, cuddle time, and naps. Let's dive deeper into what to expect for sleep and how to cope with the changes in your sleep.



Key Takeaways



Babies need to eat every 2-3 hours, even during the night



Change diapers in the middle of the feeding instead of the end



Maximize your time to sleep



Tag partner in to assist



Always use safe sleep practices with baby



Dream Feed

What to Expect

Here is the reality of babies and sleep- we need sleep. They need sleep. When babies are born, they sleep A LOT. However, they do not have a rhythm established, just sleeping when they begin to feel tired. Unfortunately, sometimes their rhythm is completely opposite of our own. Making it difficult to find time for you to rest as well.

Along with needing sleep, you and your baby will also need to eat. Babies typically eat an average of every 2-3 hours. Sometimes sooner, depending on your baby's needs. That being said, due to their sleep cycles and nutrition needs, this can be expected throughout the night as well. Nighttime feeds can actually account for up to 20% of feeds! Always respond to baby's hunger cues. This helps to ensure their feeding needs are met, especially during waking hours.

Obviously this can be a disruption to your typical sleep routine. Luckily there are ways to maximize sleep throughout this transition. Plus, this will not last forever. At some point in time, your baby will begin to sleep through the night. Understand, that sleeping through the night is a developmental milestone that can happen at different times for everyone. For now, let's focus on the present.



Sleep Recommendations

You have probably gotten so much sleep advice between family, friends, and the reels on social media. Thing is, every baby and every family is different. Use what works, but do so with information to make the best decision! The most important thing to consider when discussing sleep is a safe sleep environment. Baby should be sleeping on a firm and flat surface. Babies have a tendency to fall asleep just about anywhere, but we want to make sure that their positioning is safe for them to sleep in. That means not using products that are indirectly marketed for sleep, but not considered "sleep friendly". Products that are considered sleep friendly are able to be labeled as cribs, bassinets, play yards, and sleepers. If you are using swings, bouncy seats, car seats, etc. Be sure to gently move the baby onto a safe sleep surface. Lastly, when you do lay your baby down to sleep, make sure to do so on their back!

If possible, try to keep the baby's sleep environment in the same room as you. The AAP recommends that this be done on a separate sleep surface; like a crib, bassinet, bedside sleeper, etc. Rooming-in- what this is commonly referred to as, actually has been shown to reduce the risk of SIDS! Baby's sleep area should not have any kind of pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, crib bumpers, etc. These products carry a suffocation risk and make for an unsafe sleeping environment.

It can be tempting to try to offer large feedings prior to laying baby down for the night in hopes it will help them sleep longer. However, studies show that this is actually not successful and raises the risk of SIDS. It is just as important during nighttime hours to respond to your baby's cues and needs as it is during the day.

Did you know that your breastmilk changes constantly to meet your baby's needs? That includes an increase of melatonin in your breastmilk in the evenings! If you are expressing breastmilk, try labeling and offering milk that is from a similar time of day as the feed that you are offering!

- Sleep on flat surface
- Back to sleep
- Room in
- Respond to cues and needs

How to Get More Sleep



Daytime Sleep

You may hear from many people, "sleep when the baby sleeps." While it's not bad advice, it is hard to actually follow. Along with being a parent you are also a human. You will still need time to give yourself self care like going to the bathroom alone and without being on a timer, showering, eating, and all the other things that are on your plate. So how do you do both? The goal is to maximize your time when you are able to sleep.

- While you are feeding baby, attempt to snack too
- Leave the dishes be
- Task out to others
- Try to sleep if possible

I know it sounds daunting to multitask while feeding a baby, but you will get more comfortable! By fulfilling your needs at the same time as your baby's, it's almost like you get back some time in between feedings for whatever else that is needed. To be honest, we have all dropped food on our baby's head while feeding them.

If people come to visit, make them earn their snuggles. This time is not just about holding and caring for babies. It is about holding and caring for parents too. You have just brought a new life into this world, you deserve rest and healing!

Should you feel obligated to complete daily chores during this time, remember- the dishes can be washed at any point in time. Laundry can wait. Who needs pants immediately postpartum anyway? Plus, see above. When you do have someone there to visit, ask to tag out to get some sleep! They can wake you should they need anything.

If you are feeling sleepy, it is OK to take the time while your baby sleeps to get some shut eye as well. This is not a slumber party contest to see who can stay up longer. We are adults now, sleeping is cool!



Nighttime Sleep

We know that as parents we will inevitably have to wake up and care for the baby throughout the night. How do we get through that disruption to our sleep? Just like the time back during the day, we want to try to do the same at night. If there is any way to make the feeding/changing process at night shorter and easier to fall back asleep after, it leaves more time for sleep!

Some ways to do this is:

- Tag partner in to assist with feedings, diaper changes, bottles, or pump parts
- Change diapers in the middle of the feeding instead of the end
- Dream Feed

When waking up in the middle of the night to care for a baby, it can be helpful to have a team effort approach. One person does the feeding, while the other does diaper changing, prepping milk, or even cleaning bottles. Utilize a partner during this to help complete all of the tasks so that you both can get back to sleep sooner. Or, some families do shifts throughout the night! Whatever works best for you, baby, and your feeding method.

Typically feeds are paired with diaper changes. Because, well... your baby will be going through a lot of diapers while they grow! Try to change diapers in the middle of the feed versus the end of the feed. Whether that be between nursing on each side or half way through a bottle.

Dream feeding is a method of feeding that starts while the baby is still in a light sleep state. You can do this while breastfeeding or even with a bottle (using paced feeding of course!). While it does require a bit of anticipation of the next feed, if you happen to wake up before the baby does, you can always use this tactic to try to keep the baby asleep a little bit longer.



Sleeping with Baby

Between all the feedings, exhaustion, and the fluctuating hormones; it can be easy to feel tired during feedings. It would be irresponsible and naive to think that there will never be a situation where you end up falling asleep with your baby. The next best thing is to learn how to be safe should that happen.

- Sleep on a flat surface (NOT a couch, chair, recliner)
- No other guests in bed (siblings, pets, etc.)
- Do not use excessive pillows or blankets
- Baby should be dressed lightly and unswaddled
- Baby should be full term and healthy
- Preferably breastfeeding
- You are not under the influence of any alcohol, drugs, and/or medications (that may cause drowsiness)

Need More Sleep?

We get it, keeping up with all of this can be difficult and tiring. It is important that you get the rest your body needs to function properly. If you have the ability to sleep a little longer - it is OK to take it! Should this extra sleep go past your next nursing or expression session- pump or latch the baby as soon as you can after waking up. While breast milk production is based on demand, the occasional disruption should not affect your production.



Once your baby is back to birth weight, the need to wake them to feed is no longer required! You can allow the baby to sleep to their heart's desire. This does not mean that we expect baby to sleep all night. It is ok to allow them to sleep for longer stretches (think 4-5 hours). However, you may want to take your comfort into consideration as well!

Zzzzzz

The postpartum period is definitely a transition into new roles and responsibilities. Remember, you have a responsibility to yourself as well to see to your basic needs, like sleep. Following these suggestions can help you to get that needed sleep for both you and your baby.

About SimpliFed

SimpliFed provides virtual breastfeeding and baby feeding support fully covered by health plans from pregnancy to weaning at no cost to your organization or your employees. We have national commercial, Medicaid, and TRICARE contracts to allow your employees to get access to support for free and no buy-up is required for your organization.

If you are interested in learning more or getting access to resources to share with your employees, you can email contactus@simplifed.us and we will setup a time to chat.