

Intro to Bedtime Routine: Building Healthy Sleep Habits



Understanding Bedtime Associations vs. Routines



Associations vs. Routine

Bedtime associations set the stage for a solid sleep routine, which begins around the 6-month mark of your baby's life.



Sleep Duration

Your baby will sleep between 14 to 17 hours in a 24-hour period and may begin sleeping longer stretches at night – typically 4 to 6 hours.



Naps & Wake Windows

Your baby will take 4 to 6 naps per day, with wake windows of just 45 minutes to 1.5 hours between rests.

Sleep Cues & Your Baby's Signals



Yawning

A classic sleepy cue – when you see your baby yawning, it's time to begin winding down.



Eye Rubbing

Rubbing their eyes signals your baby is getting drowsy and is ready for rest.



Fussiness

Fussiness can be a sign your baby is overtired – catching sleepy cues early helps prevent this.



Your Voice

Speaking in a soft, gentle tone during bedtime signals it's time to rest – your voice is one of the first sounds your baby knew, even before birth.



Wake Periods

More defined wake periods are a great opportunity to introduce gentle sleep associations and predictable cues.

Sleep Crutches & Gentle Alternatives



Feeding to Sleep

Shift feeding earlier in the wake window rather than right before sleep to prevent a feeding-to-sleep association.



Pacifier Use

Pacifiers offer comfort but can become a sleep crutch. Use with intention and a plan for gradual transition.



Rocking to Drowsy

Rather than rocking fully to sleep, try rocking until drowsy, then placing your baby in their crib to fall asleep in their sleep space.



Swaddling

A swaddle can help your baby feel secure and prevent the startle reflex. Once rolling signs appear (as early as 2 months), transition to a sleep sack.



Self-Soothing

Placing your baby down drowsy but awake helps them learn to fall asleep independently – a skill that benefits them as they grow.

Supporting Your Baby's Circadian Rhythm



Daytime Light

Keep daytime interactions lively and engaging with natural light exposure to help develop day/night distinction.



Calm Nights

Nighttime should remain calm and quiet with minimal stimulation to reinforce that nighttime means sleep.



Developing Rhythm

Your baby's circadian rhythm is still developing, which means they may struggle to distinguish between day and night – your consistency helps guide them.



Be Patient

Some nights will feel easier than others, and that's ok. Trust yourself – your baby is learning and growing every single day.



Sleep Space

A soothing and predictable sleep environment lays the groundwork for healthy sleep habits in your baby's future.

References

- References: What to Expect (2024), Nationwide Children's Hospital (2024), Pregnancy Birth and Baby – Australian Government (2024), KidsHealth – Nemours Foundation (2024).