Newborn Sleep

1 Safe sleep recommendations

Now there is a new factor that has to be taken into consideration when developing a sleep plan for your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics’ (AAP) guidelines for safe sleeping practices include the recommendation that babies under 6 months old, and preferably up to 1 year old, should sleep in the same room as their parents, although not in the same bed. This recommendation represents a new effort to reduce sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), as research shows that sharing a room with parents can reduce SIDS by up to 50%. Other AAP recommendations for reducing the risk of SIDS include:

- Putting babies to sleep on their backs
- Avoiding cigarette, alcohol, and drug use during pregnancy and after birth
- No use of pillows, blankets, sleep positioners, bumpers, or stuffed animals
- Use infant zip-up sleeper instead of blankets
- Breastfeeding
- Using a pacifier
- Following the immunization schedule

The AAP statement recommends that babies sleep in a crib, bassinette, or co-sleeper near—not in—the parents’ bed. The AAP acknowledges that mothers often nurse their babies while in their beds and fall asleep unintentionally, meaning many parents occasionally co-sleep at some point. With that in mind, here are some suggestions for safe bed-sharing:

- Ensure the mattress is firm and flat
- Place the baby so he cannot fall out of the bed or slip between a mattress and wall or headboard
- Eliminate blankets and pillows near baby.
- Keep the room cool
- Babies should never be in bed with adults who have consumed any alcohol or mind-altering medications or substances

Avoid sleeping with baby in bed (aka "co-sleeping") if anyone in the bed is overweight, snores, is a very heavy sleeper, drinks any amount of alcohol, or uses medications.
How can I help my baby wind down in the evening?

At the end of the day, everyone in your family may be ready to wind down. This is a time when routines can be especially important for your baby. The evening routine that you create for your baby will provide a sense of comfort and security as she grows.

Signs that your baby may be tired:

- Baby yawns.
- Baby is irritable.
- Baby’s eyes look glazed.
- Baby’s skin is flushed or mottled.
- Baby is reluctant to make eye contact or smile.
- Baby rubs his eyes or face with his fist.

You may see one or several of these signs at about the same time each day, especially in the late afternoon or early evening.

Things that help babies wind down:

- A slower pace to activities
- Quiet play in a familiar play space with several toys (others are put away)
- Snuggles, hugs, and kisses
- A shared story or book
- Low lighting/night light
- Talking/singing softly
- Playing soothing music at a low volume
- Rocking
- Bathing:
  - Have everything ready before you put your baby in the water: run the water; check the temperature; and gather soap, shampoo, towel, clean clothing, diaper, and toys.
  - This can be a time for quiet play with safe water toys.
  - You can talk to your baby as you wash her.
  - You may sing the same “bath” song each evening.
  - Being wrapped in a warm towel and gently dried can be nurturing and quieting.
  - Being dressed in clean clothes can help your baby feel comfortable and ready for bed.

Routines can be enjoyable and comforting for you and your baby. They help your child learn sequences of activities and anticipate what will happen next. You can change routines as your child grows and develops, or as your needs change. Routines also help your baby and growing child understand the rhythms of the day and what to expect next. Over time, this makes your child feel safe and secure.