



## Sleep Reference Guide

We all know that babies and toddlers need more sleep than adults but may not know much about their specific sleep needs. This Sleep Reference Guide will give you a general idea of your child's sleep requirements.

### Biological Rhythms:

The amount of sleep children need is based on biological rhythms. We all have internal clocks that make us feel drowsy at certain times both during the day and in the evening. At those times it is easiest to fall asleep and the sleep we get is most restorative. Our biological clock evolves as we grow and our brains mature; thus over time you will see shifts in both the timing and the amount of sleep your baby needs. The natural change in our biological rhythms as we age also explains why we cannot influence sleep during the first couple of months of a baby's life – these biological rhythms do not yet exist.

### Your Child's Sleep by Age:

When reading through this chart please note that your child's estimated date of delivery determines when he will typically hit sleep milestones. For example, a baby born three weeks early will tend to hit sleep milestones three weeks later than he would if he had been born on his due date.

The following is a guideline only. You know your baby best and you should always use your best judgment (in consultation with your pediatrician) when determining an appropriate sleep schedule.

#### *Newborn to 6 weeks*

- For newborns, sleep comes when it wants to and there is no discernible pattern to their sleep. Let your baby sleep as often and for as long as he would like.
- It is impossible to put newborns on a sleep schedule, as their brains are not yet developed enough to influence a sleep pattern.
- Unfortunately, most newborns have day and night confusion and tend to have long stretches of sleep during the day rather than at night.
- Many babies are fussier in the late afternoon. Most will grow out of this behavior at around 6 weeks of age.
- At this age it is ok to do whatever is necessary to soothe your baby and get everyone in your family the sleep they need.

#### *6 Weeks*

- Many babies start to sleep longer stretches of 4-6 hours during the night. This is an indication that your baby's brain is maturing. However, your baby is still too young to be put on a sleep schedule.
- Afternoon fussiness starts to go away and you might even start to notice your baby smiling socially.

#### *2 Months to 3 Months*

- Your baby is now becoming a social being and might not be as eager to fall asleep as he had been during his first

8 weeks. Some babies who were once able to sleep anywhere and through any amount of noise now need a consistent and quiet environment to promote healthy and lengthy sleep.

·Now is a great time to start laying the groundwork for your baby's healthy sleep foundation. This includes getting him used to sleeping in a consistent place (i.e. his crib or bassinet), allowing him to take naps and go to bed when he needs to and before he becomes overtired, implementing a consistent soothing routine, and starting to let him try to soothe himself to sleep.

·While your baby is not ready for a consistent sleep schedule, you should start to pay attention to his sleepy cues and put him down to sleep as soon you notice these signs. Typical sleepy cues are yawning, eye rubbing, ear pulling, zoning out or turning his head side to side. Every baby is different and as you watch him more closely you will learn your baby's signals that he is ready to go to sleep.

·Right now you can expect wakeful periods of about 60 to 90 minutes before your baby will need to nap. This means that your baby will likely be taking 4-6 naps a day of varying length.

·Bedtime should fit into your baby's wakeful period (that is, it should be about an hour after he wakes from his last nap) and you should expect between 2-4 feedings at night.

### *3 Months to 4 Months*

·At 3 months you will still need to be watching the clock to ensure your baby doesn't become overtired. However, you will start to see some daytime sleep patterns forming at around 9am, 12pm, and 3pm. At this point you can expect that your baby will take 4 naps a day.

·Bedtime should be between 6pm - 8pm and your baby may need 2-4 feedings at night.

·Now is a good time to let you baby "practice" self-soothing. If he wakes early from a nap try giving him a few minutes to see if he will return to sleep.

### *4 Months to 5 Months*

·Your baby is now old enough to be on a daytime sleep schedule. Most babies this age should be taking 3 naps a day at approximately 9am, 12pm, and 3pm.

·Short naps should be pushed to 1 hour. To do this, try leaving your baby in his crib for a full hour even if he is awake. (This is called the "hour rule.") This is a perfect opportunity for a baby to learn and practice self-soothing skills, and there is always a chance he will go back to sleep

·Bedtime should be about 2-2.5 hours after the end of your baby's last nap.

·Try your best to put your baby down sleepy but awake to promote self-soothing skills.

·At 4-5 months your baby's daytime sleep is just starting to become organized. Therefore you will need to be patient and as consistent as possible in scheduling naptimes and giving your baby the opportunity to soothe himself back to sleep when he wakes early from a nap. The most important thing you can do is to be consistent so your baby understands what is now expected of him.

### *6 Months to 8 Months*

·Your baby should be taking 3 naps a day now (at around 9am and 1pm with a variable third nap starting about two hours after the end of the second nap). The third nap will be a shorter nap because it only serves as a buffer to keep your baby rested until bedtime. You should not start a third nap after 4pm.

·Bedtime should be about 3 hours after the end of your baby's last nap and should vary based on the quality of daytime sleep (i.e. bedtime should be earlier if the quality of day sleep was poor). Your baby may need 1 feeding at night.

### *8 Months to 10 Months*

·Around this time period your baby will start to drop his third nap in favor of two naps at 9am and 1pm. The second nap should be the longer of the two.

·It is important that you pay special attention to making bedtime earlier when the transition from two naps to one nap occurs so that your child does not become overtired. Bedtime should be no more than 3-4 hours after the end of your child's second nap. One overnight feeding may still be necessary through the ninth month.

### *11 Months to 13 Months*

·This is a fairly consistent period during which your baby's sleep will likely not change that much. Your baby will still need a two nap schedule although you may start to notice that his wakeful period between naps is becoming longer.

### *14 Months to 18 Months*

·Sometime during this period you can expect your child to transition from two naps to one nap. There are several signs that this change is occurring: your child may play through his morning nap, his morning nap may start later and last too long to fit in a true afternoon nap, or the morning nap remains intact but your child may refuse to take an afternoon nap or the afternoon nap starts too late and interferes with bedtime.

·This is a difficult transition and it can take months for your child to fully settle into his new schedule. An early bedtime during this time period will help prevent your child from becoming overtired and will make this difficult transition as painless as possible.

### *19 Months to 3 Years*

·Your child will still require a nap until about the age of three.

·At around the age of 2 years many children will lengthen their naps to periods of time up to 3 hours. Do not allow your child to nap past 4pm or this will affect the quality of his nighttime sleep. It's important at this age to be consistent with this nap because your child needs this nap to stay rested.

·As your child approaches the age of 3 years there might be a period of time when he begins not to fall asleep right away and instead plays a bit during the nap. Many parents believe this means that their child is transitioning out of this nap. However, do not jump to this conclusion without first moving the start time of your child's nap back a bit. It is only natural for the start of your child's nap to slip later due to activities, the needs of your other children, etc., and often simply moving the start time of his nap back to 12:30 or 1pm is enough to restore your child's nap.

·When your child transitions out of napping you should institute quiet time (about an hour during which he stays in his bedroom and quietly plays if he chooses not to sleep). An early bedtime will once again become necessary to prevent your child from becoming overtired, as it can take a while for your child to adjust to this new long period of wakefulness. The earlier your child's bedtime, the better he will be able to tolerate this long wakeful period.

·At this stage your child may start waking up in the middle of the night, a normal side effect of his new "no napping" lifestyle. A consistent early bedtime will help him be less overtired, better rested and should alleviate his night wakings.

If you need have specific questions about your child's sleep needs please contact Well Rested Baby for a consultation - amy@wellrestedbaby.com.