

## FOSTERING GOOD SLEEP HABITS

### Infant Behavior, Cry and Sleep Center, Brown Center for the Study of Children at Risk, Women and Infants' Hospital

1. These are some approaches to foster good sleep habits and to prevent the development of difficult to treat potential sleep problems such as persistent night waking and bedtime struggles.
2. Newborns usually sleep a total of 15 to 16 hours a day with a longest sleep period of 3-4 hours. By 4 months of age, the longest episode of sleep should be at least 6-8 hours and the average child sleeps 15 hours/day. Toddlers usually sleep about 14 hours a day. At 6 months infants usually have 2-3 naps a day and by 18 months they usually take only 1 nap a day.
3. Your baby needs to have a regular bedtime, perhaps \_\_\_\_ PM.
4. Develop a soothing, regular routine at bedtime to be done in your child's room. This could include a quiet feeding, a bath, lowering the lighting in the room, singing a lullaby, listening to a music box or musical mobile, sharing a picture book, rocking and/or giving a special toy or blanket. This routine should *eventually* (by the time your child is 6 months old) end with your baby being placed into bed drowsy but awake. Do not give your baby a bottle in bed to fall asleep. This can lead to severe tooth decay, it can cause ear infections and it will probably result in your needing to get up several times at night when he/she is older to give a bottle in the middle of the night.
5. It's OK to pat your baby for a couple of minutes before leaving the room, but remember that you want him/her to learn to self soothe and put his/herself to sleep. If your baby cries once you leave, try to allow her/him to cry for 10-15 minutes before returning to room. This allows your baby to learn ways to self-soothe and put him/herself to sleep.
6. If you must return, use as little interaction as possible. Try laying your baby down and a couple minutes of patting her/him before leaving the room. Try not to pick your baby up or turn on the lights. You may also use this technique for night wakings, if your child does not need to be changed or fed.
7. When your baby wakes at night, keep feedings as "business only" which means to try not to wake either of you up very much, to feed at the bedside (preferably not with TV) and get him/her back in bed as quickly as possible. Don't even change the diaper unless you feel it is necessary.
8. Try to get your baby up for the day by \_\_\_\_AM
9. Choose a regular time for naps, usually to follow a feeding and try to keep to this schedule for at least a few weeks. In the first 2 to 3 months, babies should be tired and ready for a naps when they have been awake for 2 to 3 hours.
10. Limit daytime naps to a maximum of 2 to 2 ½ hours each by waking your baby after this time.
11. Try to have \_\_\_\_ naps per day and keep your baby awake for 1 1/2 - 2 hours before bedtime to encourage drowsiness and better nighttime sleeping.
12. If your child naps in an infant seat or swing, consider putting it in a quiet room to limit distractions.

### Family Support

1. Consider asking a friend or family member to stay with your baby for brief periods so you can have a break.
2. Try to nap, meditate or otherwise relax when your baby does.
3. It is important to identify at least 30 minutes a day of "Mom Time" when you can read a book, watch TV or go for a walk, as you please.
4. Try to get out together as a couple in the next few weeks.