

PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES OF NYC

SLEEP: some general guidelines

Sleep is a powerful regulator of mood, behavior and performance.

It is important to respect a babies need for sleep.

Sleep expectations:

Newborns: 16-17 hours/day, 7 daily sleep periods

Babies are born nocturnal and you want to help shift their day/night cycles. *

1-4 months: 15 hours (longest nighttime sleep stretch is 4-9 hours)

4-8 month: 12-16 hours/day, 2-4 hours of napping plus 10-12 hours at night

Napping:

4-6 months: 3 naps daily

6-9 months: 2 naps daily

12-24 months: 1 nap daily

SLEEP BEGETS SLEEP: The better a baby naps during the day the better they will sleep at night. When babies are overtired, there is an increase in adrenaline/a hyper-alert state that can makes baby's fussy and irritable and less likely to fall asleep.

Signs of sleepiness: a slight quieting, a lull in being busy, slight staring off or hint of calmness. Make sure babies are put to sleep at these times before they become overtired. And ideally put them down awake and drowsy. Try to avoid the baby falling asleep in your arms. Sleeping alone is an important part of learning to separate from parent without anxiety and see self as independent.

Signs of overtired: fussing, rubbing eyes, yawning, irritable or cranky.

*From birth to 5 or 6 months, babies should not be awake during the day for more than 2 hours at a stretch. And they should not sleep for more than 3 hours per nap.

Babies prefer a regular routine of soothing before bedtime. Bedtime rituals help calm children. Start these routines early BEFORE sleepy signs change to overtired fussy signs.

Books that are helpful

1. Marc Weissbluth: Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child
2. Richard Ferber: Solve Your Child's Sleep Problem