

SLEEPING LIKE A BABY...

Do you mean wake up and scream every two hours all night?



We encourage parents to satisfy their newborn's every need. Newborns need to bond with their parents and know their needs will be met. A newborn can't be spoiled, can't be picked up too much, and can't be expected to sleep through the night. When a newborn awakens at night crying and hungry, the baby should be fed promptly.

But this special time of life does not go on forever. By the age of four months, babies have "settled" into a nighttime sleeping pattern and are ready to go without feedings overnight (at least six hours). After the age of four months, for the first time, we ask parents to *set limits* on their baby's behavior. This is the first time parents are being asked to say "no" to their baby, and it can be very difficult.

Think ahead for a moment: what will you do when your baby becomes a toddler and wants to run out into the street? You'll say "no" and stop him or her! You will clearly and consistently say "no" regardless of how many times your child cries or tries to run out into the street. Your toddler will quickly learn and accept that running out in the street is not ok. When it comes to night sleeping, parents often have trouble with such clear and consistent limit setting. Babies often learn to keep crying because mom or dad will eventually give up, come in, feed and rock them!

Try not to let your baby nap for long periods during the day. We recommend a regular bedtime routine and time. A four month old baby should move into his/her own room (or partitioned area). A baby should be sleepy but not asleep when put into the crib and get used to falling asleep there.

Everyone wakes up a few times every night, even when they sleep well. It's part of normal sleep cycles. We've all learned to just roll over and go back to sleep, a skill babies haven't learned. If a baby is always fed, rocked, and sung to for sleeping, it is frightening to fall asleep any other way. Your baby can quickly learn that it is safe to fall asleep in the crib.

How should parents train their baby to sleep? We don't ask you to let your baby cry endlessly, but we do recommend that you let your baby cry for 5 minutes. Time it, because when you first start, each minute feels like forever. If your baby is still crying, return to the room for a brief period.

Reassure yourself and your baby that everything is alright, and then leave again. Keep these return visits brief and simple. Don't feed, sing to, or rock your baby. Return every five minutes, gradually increasing to ten minutes if needed. If you "give in" after a few tries, you will be teaching your baby to keep screaming.

The first few nights may be hard, but soon your baby will learn this important skill. Don't feel guilty! A rested parent has more energy for their baby the next day. Your baby will have no resentment and will not feel abandoned. We are happy to discuss this further in the office if needed.

NO



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