



Waking Up Is (Sometimes) Hard to Do

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You may have heard the age-old adage "never wake a sleeping baby." Many expectant parents take this advice to heart and prepare themselves and their homes accordingly.

In anticipation, they begin by turning the ringer off switches on their phones and making signs to tape over their doorbells that read, "Please knock quietly—baby sleeping."

After bringing home a newborn of your own, however, you're far more likely to discover that most young babies (older babies are a different story) can sleep through just about anything—vacuums, doorbells, and a whole host of ringtones included. Instead of figuring out ways to ensure peaceful slumber, many new parents find themselves wondering if, in fact, their babies would awaken to the sound of a freight train going by or the house being hit by a tornado.

You'll find that as your baby gets older, they will probably become a lighter sleeper. For the time being, however, feel free to relax a little on the noise control unless, of course, you need it so you can sleep.



How to Wake a Sleeping Baby

As we mentioned at the outset, newborns have an impressive ability to ignore the world around them when they see fit to sleep. If you find yourself in the position of needing to wake up your baby, here are some simple techniques that sometimes (notice we said "sometimes") work.

- **The kinder, gentler approach.** You might as well start out with the kinder, gentler approach to baby waking and see what kind of response you get. This can include such basic measures as talking, singing, and gentle stimulation. Pick your baby up, talk to them, move their arms and legs around, even tickle the bottom of their feet or rub their cheek—whatever works to rouse them.
- **Dressing down.** Whether it's the physical stimulation or the increased exposure to cool air that does it, many newborns absolutely hate to be undressed. Your newborn may find it well worth the time and effort it takes to awaken and voice their opinion.
- **Double-duty diapering.** Even if your baby doesn't technically require one, going through the motions (even reusing the same diaper, assuming it's still clean) may help if undressing alone doesn't do the trick. This works especially well for those babies who have a tendency to fall asleep before finishing their meals. We think of it as dual-purpose diapering (</English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/Changing-Diapers.aspx>) because diaper changes not only tend to wake up sleeping babies but are more likely to be needed around feeding times.
- **Cleanliness is next to wakefulness.** Giving sleepy babies a bath (/english/ages-stages/baby/bathing-skin-care/pages/bathing-your-newborn.aspx?_gl=1%2axtd164%2a_ga%2aotcymzy5njkwjje2mjc0oti4odm.%2a_ga_fd9d3xzvqq%2amtyynzq5mjg4my4xljeumtyynzq5mjky4w&_ga=2.6340475.893803736.1627492883-972369690.1627492883) certainly takes things a step beyond undressing and changing diapers, but has been known to work when all else fails. While we certainly don't approve of cruel and unusual punishment in any way, shape, or form, there may be times when some of you simply have no other choice than to resort to a bath to get your baby to wake up. This more "drastic" measure is most appropriately used sparingly, such as in the event that a newborn is long overdue to eat, and can be modified to accommodate your baby's umbilical cord (</English/ages-stages/baby/bathing-skin-care/Pages/Umbilical-Cord-Care.aspx>) as needed.

Remember

The approaches we have described to you are obviously based on the assumption that your newborn is healthy. While it is true that newborns are known to be challenging to wake up at times, you should also be aware that babies who are not easily aroused or responsive despite their parents' best efforts need medical attention. Do not wait to discuss any questions or concerns you might have about your baby's sleepiness with their doctor: Seek medical help immediately if your newborn seems increasingly sleepy, unresponsive, or hard to arouse.

More information

- [How to Keep Your Sleeping Baby Safe \(/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/a-parents-guide-to-safe-sleep.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/a-parents-guide-to-safe-sleep.aspx)
- [How Often and How Much Should Your Baby Eat? \(/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx)

About Dr. Jana



Laura A. Jana, MD, FAAP, is a pediatrician and mother of 3 with a faculty appointment at the Penn State University Edna Be; the author of more than 30 parenting and children's books and serves as an early childhood expert/contributor for organi Bureau, Primrose Schools, and *US News & World Report*. She lives in Omaha, NE.

About Dr. Shu



Jennifer Shu, MD, FAAP (<https://www.aap.org/en-us/professional-resources/publishing/Pages/Jennifer-Shu-and-Laura-Ja>) HealthyChildren.org and provides oversight and direction for the site in conjunction with the staff editor. Dr. Shu is a prac in Atlanta, Georgia, and she is also a mom. She earned her medical degree at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond California, San Francisco. Her experience includes working in private practice, as well as working in an academic medical newborn nursery at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire. Dr. Shu is also co-author of *Food Fights* (ht nutritional-challenges-of-parenthood-armed-with-a-bottle-of-ketchup-2nd-e-2/?

_gl=1%2a1d9jknc%2a_ga%2aMTMzMzM2ODUONi4xNjMwNDM2MjQz%2a_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aMTYzMzYyODY3MS4xM 63625720.1633616711-1333368546.1630436243) and *Heading Home with Your Newborn* (<https://ebooks.aappublications.org>;

2nd-edition) published by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

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