

Baby's Naptime

If your baby is not napping well during her first few months of life, you may want to try to cut back on the time she is awake by 15 minute increments. If she is getting overstimulated, then she will fight sleep and be difficult to get to nap. The way to prevent this is to watch her "sleepy" cues to make sure that you put her down when she is beginning to get sleepy.

Some parents believe that letting their child cry will harm him or her. Fifteen or twenty minutes of crying will not harm your child physically or mentally. Babies will learn to self-soothe and fall asleep by themselves, but only if you let her. It is very important that babies learn to fall asleep by themselves so that they can self-soothe if they awake in the middle of the night. Otherwise, you may have a child that will not sleep through the night for years.

Regular sleep patterns are intermeshed with regular eating patterns, so let us look at the stages of a baby's life:

- * Newborn: Your newborn will sleep anywhere from 16 to 20 hours a day, including the naps that he takes between feedings. When your baby has been fed, let him stay awake for a short while and then put him down before he becomes overstimulated.
- * Two months: At two months and older, your child should be allowed to try to self-soothe during their naptimes and bedtime. Crying is normal when you put your baby down, but it is okay. If he cries for longer than 10-15 minutes, then go in and check on him. Don't get him up, but pat his bottom or lightly rub his back until he calms down.
- * 3-6 months: At around 3-6 months, your baby will stop taking one of his naps. Usually it is the third nap or late afternoon nap that they do not need as much. He may be a little fussy and may want to take a little nap, but you need to try to keep him up if you want him to go to bed at a decent time and sleep soundly through the night.
- * 16+ months: When your child is between 16-20 months, they usually quit taking the morning nap in favor of a longer nap in the afternoons. Babies this age usually sleep between 10-12 hours a night and take a 2-3 hour afternoon nap.

Ground Rules about Naps

1. You decide when the nap starts and ends, not the baby.
2. When your baby is older than 4 months old, she will wake up crying if she

hasn't slept enough. She might have a dirty diaper, be in a position that is not comfortable, or cold/hot. Fix the problem and encourage her to go back to sleep. Babies that have enough rest wake up happy, talking, and in a good mood.