

Sleeping

Patience, praise and peace

There are many different reasons why babies do not sleep. It is normal for a baby at six weeks old not to sleep through the night. Feel confident in yourself to know whether your child is really distressed or just restless. Trust your instincts.

Try to establish a regular night time sleep routine early on by putting them to bed at a regular time (day and night). Place your newborn baby on their back to sleep, in a cot in your bedroom for the first six months. Prepare a warm, comfortable place for them to relax in. Adult beds are not designed for babies and toddlers and do not conform to safety standards. It is advised that bottle-fed babies should not be fed in bed. If breastfed, babies can be breastfed sitting up and then placed back in their cot, or your Health Visitor can show you how to breastfeed in a safe, comfortable position.

Reading to your child at bedtime helps them to unwind, and gives you some special time together. If your child is scared of the dark, try keeping a night light on. Bedwetting may be stressful for both of you and can wake your child. It is not easy to know why some children take longer to be dry at night than others. Try not to lose your patience or punish them, your child is not doing this on purpose. Children learn at their own pace and praise and support will help.

Bed-sharing with your baby is never completely safe. It is particularly dangerous for your baby to sleep in your bed if you (or your partner):

- Are a smoker (even if you never smoke in bed or at home).
- Have been drinking alcohol or taken any drugs.
- Have taken any medication that makes you drowsy.
- If your baby was premature (born before 37 weeks).
- If your baby was low birth weight (less than 2.5kg).
- If you or your partner are overweight.

It is very dangerous to fall asleep together on a sofa, armchair or settee. It is also risky to allow a baby to sleep alone in an adult bed.

A safe sleeping environment

1. Place your baby in the 'feet to foot' position i.e. baby's feet at the foot of the cot.
2. Newborn babies sleep in a cot in parent's bedroom.
3. Make sure baby is not too hot nor too cold.
4. Put baby to sleep on their back.
5. Keep baby's head uncovered.
6. Do not smoke.
7. No pillow, stuffed animals, toys or bumper pad.
8. No heavy or loose blankets.

9. If a blanket is used, it must be tucked in and only as high as the baby's chest.
10. Crib sheets must fit tightly over mattress.
11. Use a clean, firm, well-fitting mattress. Mattresses should carry the BSI number BS-1877-10:1997.

1

I am so tired when my baby wakes up at night it seems easier to share the bed.

2

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot by your bedside for at least the first six months. Try to establish a regular sleep routine.

3

Speak to your Health Visitor about how to keep your baby safe and get some sleep.