



# MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

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## PREVENTION OF SLEEP PROBLEMS

Parents want their children to go to bed without resistance and to sleep through the night. Newborns, however, have a limit to how many hours they can sleep (usually 4 or 5 hours). By 2-3 months of age, 50% of infants can sleep through the night. By 6 months, most infants have acquired this capacity.

### Newborns

- Place your baby in the crib when he is drowsy but awake. Your baby's last waking memory should be of the crib, not of you or of being fed. They must learn to put themselves to sleep without you. Don't expect them to go to sleep as soon as you lay them down. It often takes 20 minutes of restlessness for a baby to go to sleep. If they are crying, rock them and cuddle them, but when they settle down, try to place them in the crib before they fall asleep. Handle naps in the same way.
- Do not let your baby sleep for more than 4 consecutive hours during the daytime. Attempt to awaken them gently and entertain them. In this way, the time when your infant sleeps the longest will occur during the night.
- Make middle of the night feedings brief and boring. When they awaken at night for feedings, don't turn on the lights, talk to them, or rock them. Try to feed them quickly and quietly.
- Don't awaken your infant to change diapers during the night. The exceptions are soiled diapers or when treating a bad diaper rash. If you must change your child, use as little light as possible, do it quietly and don't provide any entertainment.
- Don't let your baby sleep in your bed. This is not safe and is a significant risk factor for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). It may seem like an easy option for a good night's sleep but it becomes a different habit to break as the child gets older.

### Two-Month-Old Babies

- Move your baby's crib to a separate room if possible.
- Try to delay middle-of-the-night feedings. Your baby should be down to one night feeding. Don't awaken your baby at night for a feeding except at your bedtime (this will increase the chances that your baby will sleep all night).

### Babies Older Than Six Months

- Try discontinuing the 2:00 am feeding by 6 months of age. Your bottle-fed baby does not need to be fed more than four times per day. Breast-fed babies do not need more than five nursing sessions per day. Eliminate night feedings and give the last night feeding at about 10 or 11 PM. If your child cries during the night, rub his back for comfort, but do not feed him.
- Don't allow your baby to a bottle to bed.
- Make middle of the night contacts brief and boring. All children have 4 or 5 partial awakenings each night. They need to learn how to go back to sleep on their own. If your baby cries for more than 15 minutes, visit them but don't turn on the light, play with them, or take them out of the crib. Stay for less than 60 seconds. If your child is standing in the crib, don't try to make them lie down. They can do this themselves. If crying continues, you can check on your baby every 15-20 minutes, but do not take them out of the crib nor stay in the room until they go to sleep.
- Leave the door open to your child's room if possible, and leave a night light on.
- For middle of the night fears, make contacts prompt, brief and reassuring. Do not take them out of the crib.

### Children Older Than One Year

- Establish a pleasant and predictable bedtime ritual. Children need a familiar routine. All parents can be involved at bedtime, taking turns with reading or make-up stories. Kiss and hug the child "good night". Be sure the child's security objects are nearby.
- Once put to bed, your child should stay there. Some older infants have temper tantrums at bedtime. You should ignore these protests and leave the room. Enforce the rule that your child cannot leave the bedroom.
  3. If your child has nightmares or bedtime fears, reassure them.