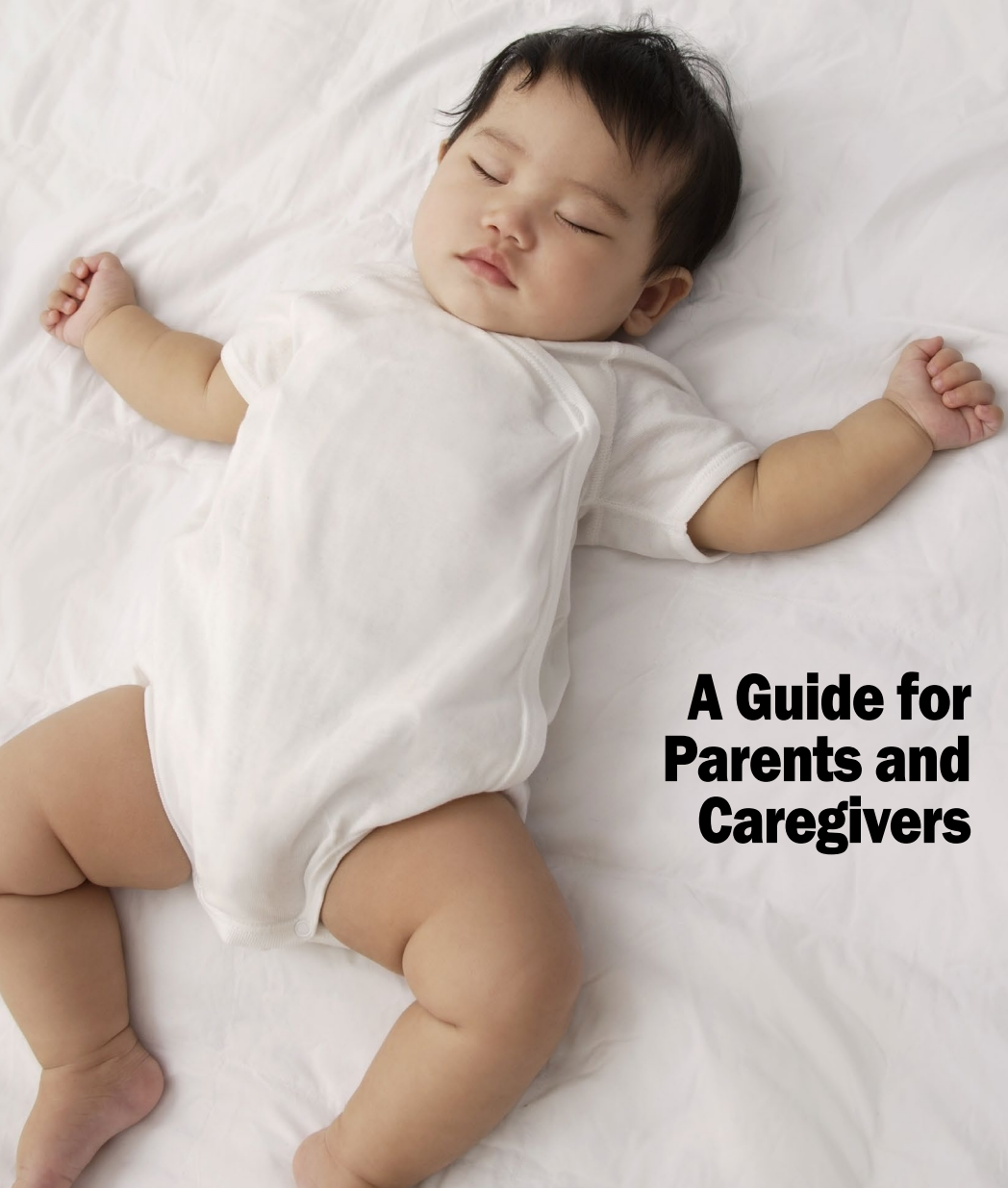


Understanding Infant Sleep



**A Guide for
Parents and
Caregivers**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
A Guideline for Infants:.....	4
Recognizing Sleep Cues	5
0-6 months.....	5
6-12 months	5
Creating Healthy Sleep Routines.....	6
Pre-Sleep Routine for 0-6 months	6
Pre-Sleep Routine for 6-12 months	7
Sleep Strategies for Babies over 6 months	8
Camping Out.....	8
Controlled Comforting	9
Dressing Your Baby for Safe Sleep	10
Safe Sleep Clothing Tips	10
Signs of Overheating	10
Additional Information.....	11

Introduction

Sleep is essential for an infant's growth and development, yet newborns have shorter sleep cycles and wake frequently for feeding. In the first few months, they lack a fully developed circadian rhythm, but by 2 to 3 months, melatonin production helps them distinguish between day and night.

By six months, many infants begin sleeping longer at night and develop more predictable naps, though patterns vary based on factors like temperament and feeding habits.

Caregivers play a key role in fostering healthy sleep by recognizing sleep cues, maintaining a consistent bedtime routine, and ensuring a safe sleep environment. Understanding these changes helps set realistic expectations and supports both infant well-being and caregiver rest.



A Guideline for Infants:

Age of Infant:	Amount of Sleep:
Newborns	14 to 18 hours per day <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sleeps in short periods (30 minutes to 3-4 hours at a time)• Awake for no more than 2 hours at a time• May cry or be fussy for 3 to 6 hours, especially in the evening• Sleeps more during the day than at night
2-6 Months	14 to 16 hours per day <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes 2 to 3 naps (each lasting 30 minutes to 3 hours)• After 3 months, nap patterns become more regular• Might still have an evening fussy period• Nighttime sleep starts to get longer
6-11 Months	11 to 14 hours per day <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes 2 naps (each lasting 30 minutes to 2 hours)• More awake time during the day• Sleep cycles become more stable
12 Months	10 to 13 hours per day <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes 1 to 2 naps (each lasting 30 minutes to 2 hours)• Might resist naps but still needs them for development• More awake time in the afternoon and evening

Recognizing Sleep Cues

Babies show signs of sleepiness before becoming overtired. Responding early makes it easier for them to fall asleep.

0-6 months

Early Sleep Cues: Rubbing eyes, yawning, fussing, glazed look, rapid blinking.

Late Sleep Cues: Crying, arching the back, increased irritability.

6-12 months

Early Sleep Cues: Rubbing eyes or head, tugging ears or pulling hair, yawning, sucking thumb or fingers, staring off or losing focus.

Late Sleep Cues: Crying, fussing.

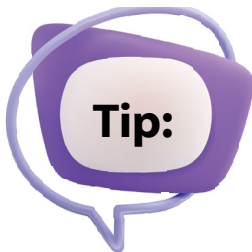


Creating Healthy Sleep Routines

A consistent bedtime routine helps babies learn when it's time to sleep.

Pre-Sleep Routine for 0-6 Months (20-30 Minutes)

- Give your baby a gentle massage to relax them.
- Change their diaper and put on sleepwear.
- Read a short story in a gentle voice.
- Sing a soft song to help them settle.
- Lay your baby in their sleep space and say, "Good night."

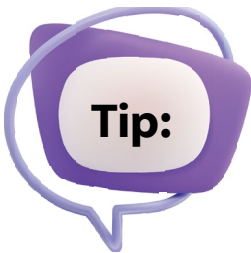


If your baby wakes or makes noise while sleeping, wait a few minutes before picking them up. They may settle back to sleep on their own.

Creating Healthy Sleep Routines

Pre-Sleep Routine for 6-12 Months (20-30 Minutes)

- Bath or diaper change to signal bedtime.
- Read a short book to promote relaxation.
- Sing a lullaby to create a soothing atmosphere.
- Dim the lights to prepare for sleep.
- Lay baby down in their sleep space to establish independent sleep habits.



The more consistent the routine, the better the baby's sleep will become.

Sleep Strategies for Babies Over 6 Months

At six months, babies can start learning to sleep on their own. Two common sleep strategies, Camping Out and Controlled Comforting, help babies sleep better while feeling secure.

Camping Out

Camping out helps babies adjust to sleeping alone while knowing you are nearby. Research shows that this strategy is effective when completed properly.

How to do it:

- Follow a routine: Put your baby in their sleep space when drowsy. Use a calming phrase like, "Night night, I love you".
- Give space: Sit near their crib but do not pick them up. Each night, move farther away.
- Stay quiet: Speak softly if needed. Avoid eye contact or stimulation.
- Check at night: If your baby wakes, return to your last position and repeat the steps.
- Be patient: This method takes time. Stick with it for at least two weeks.



Controlled Comforting

Controlled Comforting teaches babies to self-soothe by having caregivers check on them at set times.

How to do it:

- Lay baby down drowsy but awake. Say a comforting phrase, then leave the room.
- Wait before checking: Start with (ex. 2 minutes). Gradually increase the time before checking in, but do not wait longer than 15 minutes.
- Keep check-ins brief: Speak softly, offer a gentle touch, but avoid picking them up.
- Stay consistent: Use the same wait times every night and if they wake up overnight.
- Watch for changes: If checking in makes them more upset, adjust the time.



Important Notes:

- These strategies take patience. Stick with one for at least two weeks before deciding if it works.
- Do not start a new sleep method if your baby is sick, teething, or going through a big change. If sleep does not improve, talk to a healthcare provider.

Dressing Your Baby for Safe Sleep

Babies should be dressed in light, fitted sleepwear to keep them warm without overheating. Overheating increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Safe Sleep Clothing Tips

- Use light layers instead of thick blankets. If using a sleep sack, choose the right size.
- Avoid weighted sleepwear, as it can restrict movement and breathing.
- Remove hats indoors babies release heat through their heads.

Signs of Overheating

- Sweating or damp hair
- Flushed skin
- Rapid breathing
- Baby feels hot to the touch



If the room is comfortable for you, it is comfortable for your baby.

Additional Information

Scan the QR code for more information on
Infant Sleep and Sleep Habits.





HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

April 2025

Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

durham.ca/parenting

If you require this information in an
accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

