A Little Guide to Newborn Sleep

simple guidance for the newborn days



www.beforedawnsleep.ca



Hello there!

Before Dawn
PEDIATRIC SLEEP CONSULTING

I created this guide as a starting point for tired, overwhelmed parents navigating the endless (and often conflicting) advice surrounding newborn sleep.

The good news? Newborn sleep doesn't have to be so complicated.

From understanding sleep cues and wake windows to establishing simple routines and creating a safe sleep environment, you'll find practical tips to help you better understand your baby's needs. Think of it as a little starting point to help you feel more confident in those early weeks

Looking for more? Check out my **Sleep Schedules, Simplified** guide for additional newborn sleep guidance and age-by-age sample schedules as your baby grows.

♡ *Sarah*

Owner, Before Dawn Sleep

I'm glad you're here!



Hi, I'm Sarah. I'm a certified pediatric sleep consultant, former Registered Nurse of 8 years and a mom of four in British Columbia, Canada.

My passion for sleep began with my firstborn. Bedtime was a struggle: nothing seemed to work and we were both exhausted.

One night, I put her down and stepped away. When I came back minutes later, she was asleep. That moment changed everything.

I realized she didn't need more effort: she needed the space to fall asleep on her own. From there, her sleep improved quickly and as my other children came along, I focused on building healthy sleep habits from the start.

In 2023, I left nursing to become a certified sleep consultant and founded Before Dawn Pediatric Sleep Consulting Inc.

I believe a rested family is a thriving family—and that better sleep is possible for you, too.

"The night is always the darkest before the dawn."



When things are at their hardest and it seems as if there is no solution, there is hope.

All About Newborn Sleep

tips & tricks for the fourth trimester

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Active vs Quiet Sleep

- Newborns have two stages of sleep known as active sleep (REM) and quiet sleep (NREM)
- They spend about 50% of each sleep cycle in each stage
- Sleep is permanently reorganized between 3 and 4 months and active sleep decreases

ACTIVE SLEEP

- Whimpering, groaning, crying, grimacing, smiling or even laughing
- Eyes dart around under closed eyelids, muscles may jerk or twitch
- Breathing can become irregular
- May seem uncomfortable and squirmy

QUIET SLEEP

- Falls progressively into a deeper sleep
- Very still and difficult to rouse
- Can easily move around and keep sleeping

Always give your baby a moment to see if they are truly awake. You may risk waking your baby fully by intervening when they are in an active stage of sleep.

Watching for sleep cues, following age appropriate wake windows before naps and implementing an "eat, wake, sleep" routine can provide structure and predictability to your day.

Routine Tips

- Offer full feeds every 2-3 hours
- Cap individual naps at 2 hours
- Follow an "eat, wake, sleep" routine and wake windows
- Wake baby at the same time each day
- Implement a bedtime and naptime routine
- Nap baby horizontally in sleep space often
- After 6-8 weeks, implement darkness during sleep
- Allow baby opportunities to put self to sleep from day one

Wake Windows By Age

0-4 weeks	30-45 minutes	7 months	2.75-3 hours
4-6 weeks	45-60 minutes	8-10 months	3-3.5 hours
6-8 weeks	60-75 minutes	11-12 months	3-4 hours
8-12 weeks	75-90 minutes	13-14 months	3-4 hours (2 naps) 4.5-5 hours (1 nap)
3 months	1.5-2 hours	15-18 months	5-5.5 hours
4 months	2-2.25 hours	19-23 months	5.5-6 hours
5 months	2.25-2.5 hours	2-3 years	6 hours
6 months	2.5-2.75 hours	3-4 years	no nap



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Newborn Sleep Cues



EARLY SLEEP CUES

- Staring off, flushed/red eyebrows
- Looking away, becoming disinterested in surroundings

OBVIOUS SLEEP CUES

- Fussiness, yawning (multiple), rubbing eyes

LATE SLEEP CUES

- Frantic crying, rigid/arching body, pushing away

Soothing A Fussy Newborn For Sleep: The 5S's

Use these techniques together activate the calming reflex centre

SWADDLE
Reduces the startle reflex and prevents flailing of limbs that will wake up your baby. Start with swaddling and add on these techniques until baby is calm.

SOOTHING SOUNDS
White noise or saying "shhh" loudly simulates noises heard in utero, drowns out household noises and serves as a great sleep cue.

SIDE LYING
Try holding baby on their side in the football position with slight pressure on their belly to calm them. Never put a baby to sleep in their sleep space on their side or belly.

SWAYING MOVEMENT
Your baby spent most of their time being rocked to sleep by your movements. Try a fast jiggle side to side to calm baby or a swaying movement when held in the side lying position.

SUCKING
Babies are born with a natural sucking reflex. Nutritive (breast or bottle) or non nutritive (pacifier) sucking tends to calm a fussy baby.

The ABCs Of Safe Sleep

ALONE
Your baby should always sleep alone. There should be no additional objects such as loveys, toys, stuffed animals, pillows, blankets or bumpers in their sleep space.

BACK
Your baby should always be placed down for sleep on their back. Side or belly sleeping can restrict your baby's breathing.

CRIB
Your baby should always sleep in an approved crib, bassinet or play yard on a firm, well fitted mattress with a fitted sheet.

Let's Get Started!

Every family's sleep journey is unique and the first step is understanding where you're at right now. Together, we'll take a closer look at your baby's sleep patterns and any challenges you're facing so we can build a plan that actually fits your baby and your family.

My approach is supportive, realistic and responsive to your goals. There's no one-size-fits-all method—just practical strategies tailored to help your little one learn healthy sleep habits in a way that feels manageable and aligned with your parenting style.

SCHEDULE A CALL

LEARN MORE

You're not alone in this.

Sleep can feel overwhelming at times, but you don't have to navigate it by yourself. I'm here to guide you, support you and help you make sense of what's happening so you can move forward with more confidence and clarity.

♡ *Sarah*

