

ENSI- JA
TURVAKOTIEN
LIITTO



THE FEDERATION OF
MOTHER AND
CHILD HOMES
AND SHELTERS



INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

FOR YOUR BABY'S SLEEP PROBLEMS.

Helping
your baby
to sleep



EVERYONE NEEDS SLEEP,

INCLUDING A BABY'S PARENTS.

THERE ARE SOLUTIONS AND HELP FOR SLEEP CONCERNS.



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Families with a baby need a good night's sleep

The first year of a baby's life brings great joy to the child's parents, but it is also common for them to suffer from sleep deprivation. A baby's sleep pattern is different from an adult's and changes can be difficult to predict. It's a good idea to think about what kind of sleep patterns help your family to cope and find the best way for you to sleep and rest. Challenging phases sometimes improve spontaneously or even very small changes can promote better sleep for all family members.

Lack of sleep can have many kinds of effects on a family's life. Parents' reactions to tiredness vary: while one may become forgetful, another may be weepy, irritable or testy; there are also those who can cope with everyday chores on very little sleep.

It's important for a baby to have a parent who can cope. The parent then has the strength to meet the baby's requirements, the baby can feel safe and see the parent's joy over the time spent together.

It's good to realise when fatigue has a negative impact on your family's daily life. Warning signs include:

- a parent feeling constantly tired
- a parent noticing that their mood is low
- a parent having feelings of inferiority and desperation in relation to their parenting skills or the baby's sleep pattern
- worrying about the night in advance
- feeling as though your relationship seems to be falling apart because you're both tired

It is important to do something about tiredness before you are completely exhausted. Exhaustion refers to a state of fatigue that can't be helped by having a rest. Exhaustion also makes it difficult to make any changes that are necessary. That's why it's important to discuss sleep-related issues before exhaustion takes over. You don't need to cope with exhaustion and fatigue by yourself.



The most common sleep problems that families with a baby have

- difficulties falling asleep
- waking up at night
- staying awake at night
- waking up too early
- responding when the baby is crying
- choosing where to sleep
- the need to feed the baby at night
- soothing the baby at night
- the length and timing of daytime naps





A baby's sleep is different to an adult's sleep

A baby's sleep is physiologically different to an adult's sleep. A newborn baby needs an average of 16 hours of sleep and a six-month old an average of 13–14 hours. Even babies are individuals. If a baby is healthy and full-term, they will sleep enough even if they sleep more or less than the average.

IF YOUR BABY SLEEPS POORLY, IT DOESN'T

MEAN THAT YOU ARE A FAILURE.

Night feeds play an important role

During their first months, a baby's sleep is evenly distributed between night and day. Little by little, the longest sleeping phases begin to take place at night and the baby spends more time awake during the day. The longest night-time sleeping phase for babies under the age of six months is about five hours.

It's normal and necessary for a baby to eat at night. Night feeds promote the baby's growth and development. The shorter sleeping phases regulate the baby's body temperature and support endocrine function and the genes involved in developing the circadian rhythm. Night feeds also have an impact on the amount of breast milk that the mother produces.

Night awakenings are common throughout the first 12 months of the baby's life, and only become less frequent during the second year. On average, a one-year-old baby wakes up at least once or twice every night. As they grow, babies learn to fall back to sleep. There are stages in a child's development where they can't really make themselves calm down, even if nothing is wrong with them.

If you need to wake your baby up to eat at night because the baby needs to gain weight, for example, you'll be given instructions for this at the child health clinic or hospital.

Your baby's sleep cycle

Babies are individuals from a very young age, and there can be big differences in their sleeping patterns. Some babies only sleep for an hour at most, while others sleep for several hours uninterrupted.

Sleep patterns can consist of bouts of sleep of about an hour, sometimes the sleep is deeper, sometimes lighter. Each baby's sleep pattern is individual and remains different from that of an adult for a long time. That's why even babies' sleep stages have been given distinctive names. During the light sleep stage (active sleep, precursor to adult REM sleep), babies may make noises, open their eyes and move around. They will, however, continue to sleep unless something wakes them up. The sleep phase that is the precursor of deep sleep is called quiet sleep. In this phase, babies sleep peacefully and hardly move. Some babies go from one sleep phase to the other smoothly while others wake up between phases. A baby's sleep cycle is 50 minutes while an adult's sleep cycle is one and a half

hours. A child's sleep cycle becomes similar to an adult's by about age five, and in terms of neural functions only at puberty.

When a baby wakes up at night, the adult is often in the deep sleep phase and does not immediately understand what is happening. Understanding the differences between children's and adults' sleep cycles can make it easier for the adult to deal with night-time awakenings more calmly. It's also very natural to find it difficult to stay calm. You should remember that when you're annoyed at night, it's not because you're a bad parent but that it is caused by the differences in the circadian cycles. Hormones and breastfeeding help new mothers to cope. Nursing mothers are more likely to go back to sleep and can also cope with less sleep. However, if prolonged, sleep deprivation may begin to affect nursing mothers.

Read tips in Finnish: FAQs: Baby sleep
– www.vauvaperhe.fi

How to help your baby to sleep

A routine is important for your baby

In their first months, babies don't have a circadian cycle. They sleep when they are tired and ask for food when they are hungry. Babies slowly develop the ability to follow a clear routine of meals and sleep, but they should have a clear routine from the age of 5–6 months.

Parents should stick to their own regular circadian cycle from the first weeks onwards. When parents make sure that it is light in the daytime and dark at night and have different activities for the morning, day, evening and night, it is easier for the baby to find a routine. Having a daytime routine makes it easier to handle evenings and nights. The routine is

repeated every day, and the baby learns it little by little. Very small babies can sleep when they look tired, while older babies and children are likely to start to follow the family's daily routine. Every family should have a routine that suits them. There is no right way to do this.

For many parents, the only time when they can have a moment for themselves or with their partner is in the evening or at night, which is also when the baby sleeps for the longest time. It may make it easier for parents to cope and to fall asleep if they go to bed approximately at the same time as the baby. You can reserve some evenings for yourself, others for sleeping. It's also a good idea to have a rest when your baby is having a nap. Remember that you can have a rest without sleeping. Any activities that give you pleasure help you to cope. Ask for help with childcare and household chores if necessary.

BABIES ENJOY BEING CUDDLED. CUDDLING IS GOOD

FOR THE BABY AND THE PARENT.

Benefits of a daily routine:

- *predictability increases the baby's sense of security and the parent's sense of control over daily life*
- *a clear routine often also improves the sleeping pattern*
- *it makes it easier for the parent to anticipate and interpret the baby's needs*
- *it makes it easier to schedule things to do, such as making phone calls and doing chores*



An example of a day with a small baby. Your baby will need less sleep over time, and your family's routine will decide the good time for a nap.

A day in our life

“I try to get going in the morning at the same time every day. I know that the baby is active for about an hour or two at a time during the first three months. We spend the early morning socialising, being together, reading nursery rhymes or singing. Sometimes I just hold the baby in my arms or lay him on the floor or the bed because the baby also needs a rest.

I've noticed that the baby usually eats eagerly when he's alert and rested. After a rest and a feed, the baby can cope better with having his nappy changed, and he's ready to socialise or observe his surroundings. At first, the baby was only able to focus on people or a toy for a short while.

Going out regularly is important for both of us. I get exercise and a chance to meet other mothers in the neighbourhood. The baby enjoys being with other children. The babies socialise with each other and coo when they meet, and some of them already crawl or are learning. We all sleep better on the days when we've been outdoors for a long time.

We try to calm down in the evening as I've noticed that the night routine goes out the window if we come home too late or have guests in the evening. We try to stick to the same evening routine: we read a picture book, bathe the baby, change his nappy and put on his sleepsuit. The baby starts to look tired at about eight, and that's when we put him to bed. The nights have become more predictable with this routine. I breastfeed the baby at night. I read somewhere that fresh breast milk contains melatonin and other substances that regulate the circadian rhythm of the brain.”

Mother, in search of a good night's sleep

Read more in Finnish: The baby's circadian cycle – www.vauvaperhe.fi

Sleep skills can be learned

From six months onwards, babies are able to adopt new sleep habits and tolerate bigger changes. At the age of six months, their sleep pattern, central nervous system and sociability are sufficiently developed, and the number of times they wake up at night also begins to drop. It's a good idea to make the space where the baby sleeps as dark as possible or to place a dim night light there that doesn't interfere with the baby's sleep.

Carry out the night feeds and nappy changes with as little fuss as possible so that the baby doesn't become more alert than necessary. Make sure to feed your baby well before they go to sleep to keep your baby full for as long as possible.

The most common sleep issue in infancy is sleep-onset association disorder, which refers to a baby's inability to fall asleep on their own without a parent's help. Babies are different in how much support they need to fall asleep. A baby may want a cuddle, closeness, to be rocked or fed to help them fall asleep. Even if



"A baby wakes up every 50 minutes or so but goes back to sleep and may not need a parent's help to fall asleep again."

a baby needs a lot of help to fall asleep, it's not harmful unless it's stressful for the parent. If what it takes to make a baby fall asleep puts a strain on the parent, the parent's role in the routine can be lightened. You could give your baby a sleep toy or a safety blanket, which can make the baby feel safe. Situations vary and if your baby has a cold or is in a strange place, for example, the baby may need more care and cuddling at night.

Some babies panic if they have been moved to their own bed while they are asleep. If you notice that your baby panics when they wake up in a different place from where they fell asleep, it's a good idea to get the baby used to being put to bed when they are awake and calm. This way, if the baby wakes up at night, they realise that they are in the same place and may go back to sleep without needing a parent to calm them down.

*You can listen to the episode **Unipulmiin löytyy ratkaisuja** of the Jokainen on turvassa podcast (in Finnish) on Spotify.*



If your baby can't sleep

When babies are about 4–6 months old, they may start to wake up more regularly at night. At this age, babies develop so quickly that it affects the quality of their sleep. New things like learning to move around, teething and starting to eat solid food can affect your baby's sleep. It'll take your baby longer to calm down because they are excited about their new skills. Babies can become restless at bedtime and in the evening and night in general. It can be complete chaos.

Many babies also find it more difficult to fall asleep after a busy day. If you notice that the

events of the day make it more difficult for your baby to fall asleep or deteriorate the quality of their sleep, you can try to make your days calmer and limit the number of stimuli.

Sometimes it is difficult for a baby to have a nap in the daytime. Babies often have the best quality nap outdoors in the fresh air. A baby monitor is a great help if your baby is sleeping in the garden or on the balcony.

If it is difficult for your baby to fall asleep, it could be due to:

- flatulence or stomach cramps;
- being overtired, which may be caused by too many stimuli;
- being in an unfamiliar place to sleep;
- your baby not being tired yet (being highly alert);
- your baby still wanting to interact, practice new skills or explore the world;
- the conditions not being suitable for falling sleep (it could be too bright or the soundscape at home may not be suitable for the baby to fall asleep);
- your baby having a physical issue (stomach ache, teething, a cold, etc.); or
- a change in bedtime routine.

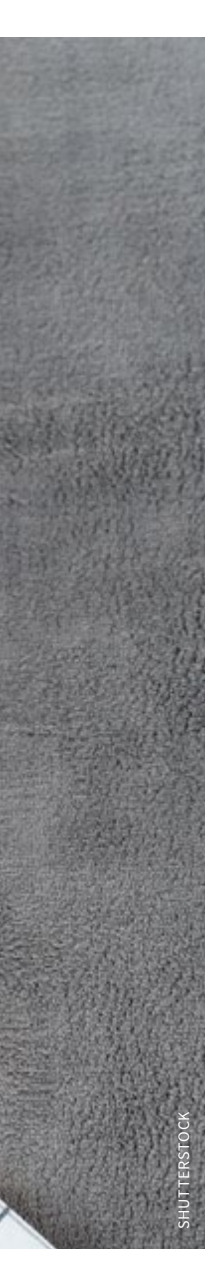
GOOD SLEEP HABITS BENEFIT

ALL FAMILY MEMBERS.

Tips for helping your baby to fall asleep

- Play and pay attention to baby during the day. Show your baby a lot of affection.
- Stick to a routine, even at weekends.
- Have some calm time before bedtime.
- Set up your evening routines. Routines include brushing teeth, changing into a sleepsuit, having a bowl of porridge or some milk and a bedtime story. Bedtime routines in the bedroom will also help your baby to fall asleep.
- Make sure that your baby's level of alertness is suitable for bedtime. Babies are suitably tired when they show signs of being tired. The 'sleep window' usually lasts 5–30 minutes.
- Make sure that your baby thinks that it's safe to fall asleep. Things that make babies feel safe include consistency, closeness (cuddling and lying next to the baby), a night light and a sleep toy.
- Try to calm down if you are restless or worried about something. Babies can sense when their parents are rushed and stressed. Make your baby's bedtime an enjoyable experience for yourself, too.





Choosing where your baby should sleep

The family decides on the best place for the baby to sleep, and you can try different places to find the most suitable solution for the whole family.

A FAMILY BED may be a good option if the baby eats often or wants to be near the parents and they are able to sleep with the baby in the same bed. If you decide to sleep in a family bed, it's important to take care of safety so that the baby won't fall out of the bed when moving around in their sleep. The baby can also sleep in a bedside crib beside the parents' bed, which gives everyone more room to sleep. People often stop using a family bed when the baby's motor skills start to develop and the baby keeps tossing and turning in their sleep, or when it's no longer safe or the parents can't sleep because the baby is moving around. Moving the baby to their own bed can be a big thing mentally for the family. Only make changes when your family is ready for them.

A SEPARATE BED FOR THE BABY (in the parent's/parents' bedroom or in the children's room) is a good option when either the baby or the parents need peace and quiet to be able to sleep and are disturbed by the movements and sounds that the others make while asleep, and when the baby doesn't wake up very often. If even the slightest sound can wake you or the baby up and it's difficult to fall asleep again, it's important that you sleep in separate rooms. If the parent is a light sleeper, it's best not use a baby monitor at night to ensure that the sounds the baby makes do not unnecessarily wake up the parent. The baby's cry will be enough to wake up the parent in another room.

Soothing your baby at night

Babies often calm down by simply having a parent there, hearing the parent's voice, feeling their touch, movement and/or being cuddled if necessary. It's a good idea to think about ways to calm your baby down – select a few methods and use them consistently, taking into consideration what the baby's behaviour is telling you. Keep your actions proportionate to what the baby needs. The most important thing is for you to stay calm. When a parent remains calm and gently soothes their baby, the baby senses that all is well and that it's fine to relax and fall asleep.

When you tend to your baby at night, stay calm and composed: do not switch on any bright lights, and do not play or interact too much with the baby. When you remain calm, your baby's senses are not overloaded, and you can try to calm the baby by doing as little as possible. It also soothes your baby if you are relaxed and breathe gently. Try to calm your baby using the subtlest means possible. You'll find the methods that work by trial and error: you'll understand what your baby likes and what supports them, and what is right for your family.

Crying is a baby's way of saying how they feel

Crying is a baby's way of expressing their feelings. Babies cry when they are hungry, tired or anxious, and sometimes because they seek love and attention. Sometimes they cry for no clear reason. You should always react when your baby cries, responding to what you think is the problem. Sometimes it's difficult to know why your baby is crying. Once you've checked or concluded that the baby is not hungry, tired, in pain or feeling poorly and that their nappy doesn't need changing, the most important thing is to stay calm. By telling your baby "I don't know how to help you but I'm here for you, we can cope with this," not only are you supporting your baby but also yourself. Sometimes that's all you can do.

Babies cry for various reasons, and parents gradually learn to recognise when a certain cry means your baby is lonely, hungry, tired or in pain. Parents also learn to read the baby's gestures, movements and sounds so that they can tell when the baby is feeling restless and is about to start crying.

Read more tips in Finnish Vauva itkee
– www.vauvaperhe.fi

How to ensure that parents can have a good night's sleep

Sometimes it takes a little bit of thinking and planning to ensure that parents can have a good night's sleep. A baby's sleep pattern can be irregular, but the situation is easier to manage if you think about how to make sure that you get the rest that you need.

Things to consider:

- How can I make night feeds as easy to carry out as possible? Should we sleep in a family bed, in which case it would be possible to breastfeed lying down, in a dim or dark room, while resting or sleeping? If you bottle feed your baby, prepare the bottles before going to bed.
- How well do you sleep? Light sleepers may need earplugs, blackout curtains, spare mattresses and other sleep aids. If you are able to fall asleep in the daytime, it's recommended that you have a nap every so often.
- If you are not able to nap in the daytime, could you do things that you really enjoy while your baby is having a nap? What is your natural sleep pattern? Are you a night owl or a morning lark? What would it take for you to be able to sleep when it's natural for you? In families in which both parents are present, one parent may want to go to bed early while the other one wakes up early. In this case it might be a good idea for the morning lark to get up in the morning to tend to the baby and go to bed early when the night owl can look after the baby.
- How do two parents organise caring for their baby at night? How can the parents have a good sleep on alternate nights?
- Could friends or family members help or does the municipality where you live offer any support services for families? Contact the child health clinic to find out if there are any municipal services for families available.

MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE

A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

EVEN DURING PREGNANCY

Infant colic

Babies may develop colic, which refers to repeated bouts of excessive crying for no obvious reason that won't stop even when the baby is comforted. Babies are said to have colic if they cry for more than three hours a day on more than three days a week. The crying usually starts in the evening. Colic is most common in babies from one week old to three or four months of age. Colic is a common problem, and about ten percent of babies suffer from it. Babies with colic don't cry because they are not looked after properly, and colic doesn't cause any long-term harm to babies.

Self-care tips:

There is no cure or treatment for colic, and the problem will go away on its own within a few months. The production of gas in the intestine can be reduced. Keep your baby as upright as possible when breastfeeding or bottle feeding; take it slowly and burp your baby often during and after feeding. You can also buy a medicine called Cuplaton® over the counter at the pharmacy. It reduces the size of air bubbles in the stomach.

Rhythmic rocking often settles babies with colic. You can carry your baby around, cuddle the baby while sitting in a rocking chair, pat them gently or rock them in a buggy. The sound of a vacuum cleaner or a ride in a car can also soothe a colicky child. You can also try swaddling, carrying the baby on their stomach or side, shushing in their ear, rocking using small movements and sucking (a dummy, or the finger or nipple of the person carrying the baby).

Babies get used to various care methods very easily, so try out different things to see what suits you and your family. Babies should mainly sleep at night, and long naps should be avoided before bedtime. You should not feed your baby every time they cry. It takes a couple of hours for the stomach to empty, and frequent feeds may make the situation worse. See a doctor if you think your baby might be allergic to something.

A newborn baby is crying while being held in a yellow sweater. The baby is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with small red cherry patterns. The baby's mouth is wide open in a cry, and its eyes are closed. The baby is being held by a person whose hands are visible, with teal-colored nail polish. The background is a textured yellow fabric.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

IS PART OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTING

Setting your baby's sleep pattern

Setting a sleep pattern helps your baby to sleep restfully at night. It often involves getting rid of unwanted sleep habits in the family, and the aim is to help the baby to go to sleep independently.

When setting a pattern, attention is paid to the situations in which the baby falls asleep, the night-time care and the entire circadian rhythm. A daily routine is the basis for a good night's sleep. Setting a sleep pattern doesn't necessarily mean giving up night feeds, but it may be part of the change.

It's normal for children under the age of 12 months to wake up at night but it may be necessary to set a sleep pattern if:

- the baby wakes up frequently and it's stressful for the parents to get the baby to go back to sleep;
- night awakenings cause stress and exhaustion for the parents;
- the baby doesn't get enough sleep over a 24-hour period.

What is a good age for setting a sleep pattern at home and who can do it?

A six-month-old baby can be gently settled into the appropriate routine if the baby is healthy and growing well. If the baby has two parents, it's advisable to agree that the person who has the strength and energy to be consistent is responsible for setting the sleep pattern. An exhausted parent may become irritated, which is not helpful when trying to soothe the baby. There should be a plan, which should be put into practice at the weekend or when the parents are off work. There can be two night-time caregivers – a parent and a grandparent, for example – if they act consistently.

The parent who stays calm for longer while the baby cries is the best person to implement changes to a sleep pattern. The other parent can take responsibility for the sleep pattern if the idea is for the mother to reduce the number of night feeds.

It is also possible to wean the baby in a family bed as the baby sleeps next to the breastfeeding mother. The mother needs to be motivated to change the pattern so that the association

between breast and sleep can be phased out. The most important thing is to find the means to soothe the baby so that the change can be carried through.

The baby's first reaction to the new sleeping arrangements may be intense crying, but they can overcome the changes when their parents are at hand. Babies don't lose their trust in their parents when they cry in their parents' arms.

Read more about setting a sleep pattern (in Finnish): Unirytmytysohje Yli 6 kk:n ikäisen lapsen uni- ja valverytmytykseen kotona bit.ly/41o7Zdh

How do you change your baby's sleep habits?

You should proceed slowly when you start changing sleep habits, making sure that you and your baby are both comfortable. You should identify your goals and break them down into small parts. Do not expect your baby to adapt to several big changes all at once. Stopping night feeds and moving your baby to a separate bed at the same time can easily lead to sleep problems.

When choosing ways to soothe your baby, focus on the current problems and solutions. Offer new, less stressful habits to replace the old ones. This way the baby won't be upset and will feel well supported. Choose a few ways to calm your baby down; don't try all kinds of methods at once. Using just a few selected methods gives the baby an opportunity to learn a new habit as the soothing is repeated in the same way and the parent's behaviour is predictable. There are ready-made sleep school models that you can explore for tips on choosing ways to calm your baby.

The cornerstones for learning new skills:

- a daily routine that is age-appropriate for your baby
- parental commitment
- consistent behaviour and shared goals
- gentle determination
- a sufficient number of repetitions
- the right timing (a parent who's well rested)

Remember to give your baby enough time to get used to the new habits before you evaluate or change your course of action. Positive changes always take time.

Read more in Finnish: Keski-Rahkonen Anna and Nalbantoglu Minna: Unihiekkää etsimässä. Ratkaisuja vauvan ja taaperon unipulmiin. 2011. Duodecim

PLEASE SEEK HELP

BEFORE EVERYONE IN YOUR FAMILY BECOMES EXHAUSTED.

Contact us:

BABY BLUES EMPLOYEES in our member associations provide sleep counselling and support for tired families. Support and appointments are offered free of charge and no referral is required. Contact your nearest Baby Blues employee.

THE FAMILY CHAT (in Finnish) provides help and support for a wide range of situations. Quickly and anonymously. You'll be supported by family support professionals in our member associations across Finland.

Chat and Baby Blues employees' contact details:

www.vauvaperhe.fi

