

Sleep for babies and young children

Although we think of sleep as a natural process, it doesn't always come easily – especially for babies and young children. However, if you know what to expect of young children's sleep behaviours, everyone can sleep a little better.

Getting tired

- Just 10 to 20 minutes of gentle play will tire out very little babies; they will probably be overtired if they've been awake for more than 1½ hours.
- At three to six months, your baby is likely to be overtired after 1½ to 2½ hours awake.
- At six to 12 months, babies get tired after 2 to 3 hours of being awake.
- At 12 – 18 months, babies who miss their morning or afternoon sleep will be overtired.

Baby cues and tired signs

Be aware of your baby's 'cues' and body language. When your baby starts to yawn, grizzle or cry, this is usually a good indication they are ready for a sleep or a change of activity. Other cues to watch for include:

Babies	Jerking arms or legs; closing fists; fluttering eyelids; frowning; arching back; staring; stiffness; sucking on fingers; difficulty focusing (even appearing cross-eyed); rubbing their eyes (for babies over four months); grasping at their own body or clothes.
Older children	Clumsiness; demands for constant attention; clinginess; boredom with toys; fussiness with food.

Looking after yourself

When a new baby arrives, your health and wellbeing can take a back seat. However, it is important to make sure you look after not just your baby's health, but your own. A healthy parent is more able to get the most out of parenting.

Tips for parents:

- Catch up on rest whenever you get a chance. Try to get some sleep when your baby sleeps. Even a lie-down can help to recharge your batteries.
- Go to bed early in the evening (when your baby first goes to sleep at night is when they have their longest sleep).
- Limit caffeine, drink plenty of fluids, try to eat balanced meals.
- Keep active – even small amounts of gentle exercise will have a positive effect on your health and state of mind.
- Remember it's okay to ask for help.

See over the page for a list of useful resources for parents.

An initiative of The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Centre for Community Child Health

For further information contact:
Centre for Community Child Health
The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne
Telephone: (03) 9345 5618 Fax: (03) 9345 5900
www.rch.org.au/ccch

Sleep – resources for parents

Australian Breastfeeding Association

www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Dads in Distress

Ph. 1300 853 437

www.dadsindistress.asn.au

Early parenting centres

Early parenting centres offer families extra support to manage the challenges of parenting.

A list of national centres is available on the Raising Children Network at:

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/getting_help_from_parenting_centres.html

Family Relationship Advice Line

Ph. 1800 050 321

Lifeline

Ph. 131 114

National Breastfeeding Helpline

Ph. 1800 MUM 2 MUM (or 1800 686 268)

Parentline

A confidential telephone counselling service providing professional counselling and support.

Search 'Parentline' online for your state or territory's phone number.

Period of PURPLE Crying

www.purplecrying.info

Raising Children Network

<http://raisingchildren.net.au>

SIDS and Kids

www.sidsandkids.org

An initiative of The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Centre for Community Child Health

For further information contact:
Centre for Community Child Health
The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne
Telephone: (03) 9345 5618 Fax: (03) 9345 5900
www.rch.org.au/ccch

