



5 Tips to Soothe a Fussy Baby and Improve Sleep

By Carolynne J. Harvey, Author & Founder of Dream Baby Sleep®

1. Practice safe sleep

Keeping your baby safe is your number one priority. Always follow these safe sleep practices from the American Academy of Pediatrics :

- Place your baby to sleep on their back
- Put your baby to sleep on a firm surface, such as a crib or bassinet, with only a fitted sheet
- Keep all other objects such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads, and toys out of your baby’s sleep space to prevent suffocation

2. Create a soothing sleep environment

An ideal environment for sleep is cool, dark, and—surprise!—not quiet.

- **Temperature.** The bedroom’s temperature should be 68 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit
- **Darkness.** Install blackout shades or curtains and remove any nightlights. Darkness sends a signal to your baby’s brain that it’s time for sleep
- **White noise.** Keep a white noise machine on while your baby is sleeping. Babies are used to constant sound after being in their mother’s womb for nine months

3. Time bedtime right

Based on the science of sleep, there are times during the day and in the evening when your baby will be able to fall asleep most easily for naps and bedtime. Bedtime for a baby 1-4 months old should start between 8pm-11pm. Bedtime for babies 4 months and older should start between 5:30pm and 7:30pm based on the quality of day sleep.

| Age | Nap(s) | Bedtime | Tips |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| 1-4 months old | Offer a nap every 60 to 90 minutes | 8:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. | Infants are still feeding frequently so they go to bed later and wake to feed often at night. |
| 4-8 months old (3 naps per day) | Offer naps at 9:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 3 p.m. | 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. | If your baby’s naps are short (less than 60 minutes), then put your baby to bed at the earlier side of the bedtime range. |
| 8-15 months old (2 naps per day) | Offer naps at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. | 5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m. | As your baby transitions from 3 to 2 naps per day |

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| | | | (between 7 and 9 months old), lean on an early bedtime until your baby adjusts. |
| 15 months and older (1 nap per day) | Offer a nap at 1:00 p.m. | 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. | Babies transition from 2 to 1 nap between 14-19 months old. |

An early bedtime can help prevent your baby from becoming overtired. An overtired baby has a more difficult time falling asleep. An early bedtime can also help prevent your baby from waking multiple times per night and rising early in the morning.

4. Have a bedtime routine

A consistent bedtime routine is relaxing and becomes a cue for your baby that it's time for sleep. After 4 months old, try moving your baby's feeding to the start of the bedtime routine. This can help your baby learn how to fall asleep on his or her own. An example of a bedtime routine would be:

- Feeding
- Offer a calming bath
- Gently dry your baby's skin with a soft towel and apply lotion
- Put on your baby's diaper and pajamas
- Read a book or sing a soft song
- Place your baby to sleep drowsy but awake

5. Soothing a fussy baby

Most importantly, take a deep breath and know that it's normal for babies to be fussy. This is especially true during the "witching hour," which occurs from sunset until bedtime (and can last for much longer than an hour). Be sure to check whether your baby is hungry, sleepy, needs a clean diaper, or is too hot or too cold. If your baby is still fussy, try these calming tips:

- Take a walk outside for some fresh air
- Give your baby a relaxing massage
- Offer a pacifier
- Read books or sing songs to your baby
- Rock or place your baby in a baby swing
- Use a baby carrier and walk around the house
- Gently move your baby's legs in a bicycle motion to help release any gas