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World Sleep Day
Sleep Well Live Better
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Hosted by World Sleep Society

Sleep is more than just rest for your baby – it's prime time for their brain and body development.¹ Here are 8 powerful ways that sleep helps them grow.

1. Brain power

Sleep builds your baby's brain!¹ In the first few years, your baby's brain makes over 1 million new neural connections every second.² Sleep helps strengthen and organise these connections, supporting big learning milestones like crawling, walking and first words.³

2. Memory & learning

Lock in memories with a good night's sleep

During the dreaming phase of sleep, your baby's brain "unpacks" the memories of the day and files them away into long-term storage,⁴ helping them remember new skills.^{3,5} A newborn will spend half of their sleep in this stage of sleep, compared to a quarter in an adult.⁶ Protecting sleep helps your baby remember what they've learnt, build new skills and support rapid brain development.

3. Immune boost

Sleep: your baby's natural defence

During sleep, your baby's body carries out "repair and reset" work that supports the immune system.^{7,8} Protecting usual sleep routines and total sleep time can be especially helpful when your baby is unwell.⁹

4. Growing strong

Big growth starts with good sleep

As babies grow, their day-night rhythm develops, and they start to sleep for longer stretches at night.^{10,11} Extra sleepy periods often coincide with growth spurts too,¹² since growth hormone peaks at night in children.¹³ Keep their room light in the day and dark at night to help set their body clock and support healthy growth.

5. Managing big feelings

Well-rested babies cope better with life's ups and downs

All toddlers have tantrums and it's normal for them to have at least 1 a day,¹⁴ but when they miss out on sleep it can lead to even more.^{15,16,17,18} Protecting sleep and using a simple, consistent bedtime routine can help your child feel more settled, happy and calm.

6. Moving & milestones

Sleep supports new skills like crawling and walking

Around these milestones, you might notice more wriggles and jerky movements in your baby's sleep. Research suggests this may help your baby's brain practise new motor skills. At 10 months, a baby will move twice as much at night than their parents.

7. Language

Daytime naps for chatty babies

Sleep can even help your baby learn the sounds and meanings of new words. A recent study found that 16-month-old babies who napped learned words more easily than babies who didn't.²¹ By 2 years, your toddler will likely be able to say 50 words and put words together to form short sentences.²²

8. Socialisation

Sleep shapes your baby's social and emotional world

Gentle, predictable bedtime routines can help your baby feel safe and secure.^{23,24,25,26} These feelings build confidence, healthy attachment and help them connect with others as they grow.



Sleep well, grow well
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Remember: Good sleep for a baby might look very different to yours, especially in the first few months when they sleep for smaller stretches and wake frequently. The good news is that every little bit of this precious sleep counts.



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