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## Sleep

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A newborn baby usually has one long four to five hour sleep period each day. Newborn babies often get their days and nights mixed up because before their birth the movements of the mother during the day encourage the baby to settle and sleep. This establishes a pattern of daytime rest and night time activity. Gradually this pattern will change and the baby will learn to sleep at night instead of during the day. Babies are growing rapidly and often have a physical need to be fed during the night.

The average amount of sleep children need is:

- Infants: 16 - 20 hours
- 12 months of age: 12 hours at night plus 1 - 2 daytime sleeps
- Toddlers: 10 - 12 hours.
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By the time children are 4 - 5 years old most of them no longer need a daytime sleep. All children are individuals and sleep requirements can vary a lot from the 'average'.

Many babies continue to wake during the night even when they become toddlers. There are a lot of reasons why babies and toddlers wake during the night; some are hunger, loneliness, teething, pain and discomfort.

As a general rule:

- at 12 months: between 30 - 40% of babies sleep through the night, approximately 10% are still waking 3 - 4 times
- at 2 - 3 years: between 40 - 45% of toddlers are waking once or twice through the night, some are still waking more frequently.

### Waking at night

Waking during the night is normal for a lot of babies and young children, however parents need their sleep to be able to carry out their daily activities. Remember - when you are tired you are at your lowest ebb. If you need someone to help or maybe just to listen:

- call your partner
- call a friend or relative
- call the 24 hour Parent Information Telephone Service (Tasmania) on 1800 808 178.

### Strategies to help your baby settle and sleep

## **Babies 0 - 9 months**

Wrapping or not wrapping

Encouraging self-settling – leave for a few minutes to see if baby will settle by itself

Establishing a regular sleep/feed pattern

Making night feeds boring – discourage games, excitement and talking

Bathing and massage

A dummy, favourite toys or blanket

Darkening the room – leaving a night light on

Providing repetitive sounds or relaxing music

Rocking or patting, a pram ride

Providing less stimulation at bed time

A baby sling

## **Older babies and toddlers**

Pre-sleep routine – make it relaxed and comfortable

Regular bedtimes which get later as less sleep is needed

Someone other than the breast feeding mother caring for night feeds

Using double nappies/night disposables

'Controlled crying' routine – have a proper assessment first, contact your FCHN

Night light

Minimising scary shadows

Sharing a bedroom with parents/siblings

*If you would like further information contact your Family and Child Health Nurse or local library*

### **Books:**

'Settling your baby' C&YHS Adelaide

'Babies' Christopher. Green

'Solve your child's sleep problems' Richard Ferber

'Night time parenting' William Sears

### **Videos**

'Sleep baby sleep'

'Hush-a-bye baby'

'A good night's sleep' Richard Ferber

Children usually grow out of night waking by the time they are three or four years old. Many are sleeping through the night long before this time.

If you are worried about your child's sleeping pattern contact your Family and Child Health Nurse or fill in the 'Sleep Assessment form' and the 'Sleep chart', and take them along to the Nurse when you visit the Child Health Centre.