

YOUR **Baby**

THE TIM NOAKES DEBATE
SHOULD YOUR KIDS BE **BANTING?**

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**SLEEP
GLORIOUS
SLEEP**
5 SIMPLE STEPS
TO A HAPPY
BEDTIME

**BIG
MILESTONES
GUIDE
NEWBORN
TO THREE**
■ HOW YOU CAN HELP
■ WHAT TO LOOK FOR

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PINK STINKS? WHY GENDER STEREOTYPING LIMITS HER FUTURE (AND HIS)



your 6 weeks to
12 months **baby**

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5 STEPS TO A HAPPY bedtime

It can be done!
Restful nights for
all are just a few
methods away

BY PETRO THAMM,
SLEEP SENSE
CONSULTANT &
OWNER OF
GOODNIGHT
BABY



William Blake is thought to have said, "Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night." Parents the world over probably want to punch this guy in the face! If only getting your little one to sleep were as easy as those four little steps. The truth is that sleep is one of the most relevant topics concerning parents today. This comes as no surprise, because it influences everything from our appetite to our ability to process information.

A well known study that appeared in the journal *Sleep Medicine Reviews* done on the trends of children's sleep time has shown a decrease in sleep time across all ages. In fact, it is very possible that children today are more sleep deprived than their parents or grandparents were

as children. Understanding then, that the average person sleeps almost a third of her life, is it not fundamentally important for us as parents to give our children (never mind ourselves) a good night's rest? Sleep increases concentration, attention, decision making, creativity, social skills, emotional wellbeing and physical health, while simultaneously decreasing mood changes, stress, anger and impulsiveness.

Good sleeping habits should be taught from birth. Research has indicated that children who struggle to sleep develop into adults with deficient sleep habits. While it may sound impossible, it can be attained in five easy steps.

1 KEEP A CONSISTENT BEDTIME ROUTINE

Does a bath and bedtime story every night really make such a difference? A study done in 2009 by Saint Joseph's

University in Philadelphia has proven that it makes a very big difference. Children with a consistent naptime routine "fell asleep faster, with fewer and shorter night time wakings," concluded its authors Mendell et al. Get your bedtime routine right from the start:

- ✓ Keep it short – 30 minutes maximum is enough time.
- ✓ Rather feed your baby before bedtime.
- ✓ Then give baby a nice and relaxing bath.
- ✓ No sugar, caffeine or exposure to screens (TV, tablet, cellphones) before bed.
- ✓ Keep it consistent. Always do the same things in the same order so that your baby knows what to expect.

2 DON'T FORGET DAYTIME SLEEP

Contrary to the popular myth that keeping your baby up during the day will make her sleep better at night,

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IS MY BABY NORMAL?

The honest truth about baby sleep is that there is no one secret thing that will make her a good sleeper or not. Sleep always needs to be assessed from a holistic perspective, taking everything from nutrition to light exposure into consideration, especially as there is a wide range in what is considered "normal sleep" in young children. No two babies are the same either, which means that some advice might work for some, and some not for others. However, getting off to a great start really doesn't hurt.

daytime sleep actually induces night time sleep. So make sure that your baby is getting an age appropriate amount of sleep during the day. For daytime naps, a short routine prior to the sleeptime will cue his brain that sleep is on the way. It is also worthwhile to keep your baby's sleep environment as calm and dark as possible without too many distractions. Having a consistent nap space (like her bed or a cot) also does wonders if you struggle to get your child down for naps.

3 GIVE BABY ADEQUATE AWAKE TIME

Babies get overstimulated very easily, and an overstimulated brain is difficult to switch off when it comes time to sleep. Make sure that you do not keep your baby awake for a period longer than what she can handle. Watch your baby and learn from the signs that she gives (as all children are different) to know when she's overstimulated. Some babies yawn when they are overtired, while others arch their backs or cry. Try to find your baby's window of opportunity – this is the amount time your baby can be awake before she gets tired, but not overtired. For some babies, just ten minutes can make the difference between being irritable or a happy camper.

believe, putting your child to bed as late as possible won't help him sleep better. It's best to put a child to bed earlier (around 7pm) in order to fit in with her body's natural circadian rhythms (our awake and sleep cycles) and metabolic processes that aids sleep. Making sure that you child gets the adequate amount of sleep during infancy will give her adequate amount of sleep she needs for brain development. Putting your child to bed later (as you might think the reward will be a lie in the next morning) will have the reverse effect and make her wake up even earlier.

5 GIVE HER A CHANCE TO FALL ASLEEP ON HER OWN

Probably the biggest mistake parents make is not allowing their children to fall asleep on their own at times. Developing good sleep skills is a natural process (as is walking and talking), if given the right type of environment for such development. From early on, give your baby the opportunity to fall asleep without sleep aids such as rocking, soothers, music, or a feed. She might just surprise you and fall asleep without you swaying her because she's learnt how to soothe herself back to sleep. **YB**

4 STICK TO AN EARLY BEDTIME FOR BABY

Contrary to what some people

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OUR EXPERTS

DR PAUL SINCLAIR, PAEDIATRICIAN

I'VE OFTEN NOTICED ONE OF MY BABY'S EYES OCCASIONALLY MOVE TO THE SIDE DURING THE DAY. EITHER ONE OR THE OTHER EYE WILL DO THIS. I HAVE SPOKEN TO A NURSE AND SHE SAID THAT IT'S NOT LAZY EYE, BUT RATHER SOMETHING SHE WILL GROW OUT OF. I'M STILL CONCERNED THOUGH. WILL THIS NEED SURGERY?

DR SINCLAIR ANSWERS:

Any squint, whether persistent or intermittent (as is what you've explained), that is still apparent in a baby over six months of age should be assessed by your baby's paediatrician, so I would urge you to make an appointment. This is because both eyes should be conjugate, or aligned, all the time by this age. Your paed will probably refer you to an ophthalmologist who, together with an optometrist, will assess your baby's visual acuity to ensure that any issues involving her vision, eye muscles and nerves are diagnosed and treated. The sooner this is done, the better, as early intervention will prevent a persistent squint or even loss of vision.

Email your question for our experts to: kerryn@yourbaby.co.za. Please note that experts unfortunately cannot respond to each question personally. The answers provided on these pages should not replace the advice of your doctor.



HOW MUCH SLEEP SHOULD MY BABY BE GETTING?

AGE	NUMBER OF NAPS	TOTAL LENGTH OF NAPTIME	NIGHTTIME SLEEP IN HOURS	TOTAL OF DAYTIME AND NIGHTTIME SLEEP
Birth to three months	Four to five	Six to nine hours (so 30 to 50 minutes per nap)	11 to 12 hours	16 to 18 hours
Three to six months	Three	Three to five hours (so 30 to 60 minutes per nap)	11 to 12 hours	15 hours
Six to 12 months	Two	Two to four hours (so 30 to 60 minutes per nap)	11 to 12 hours	14 hours