



0-12 months

Responsive Settling

Responsive settling is recognising that your baby needs help and sensitively responding.

Sleep is complex and follows a normal developmental course similar to the way your baby develops the ability to walk and talk. The maturation of your baby's sleeping

and waking cycles are one of her most important developmental tasks. Like most of her development it occurs gradually over the first year of life.

Circadian Rhythms

In the first 4 weeks after birth your baby's 24-hour day-night rhythms are developing. At first your baby doesn't follow a day night pattern and will feed and sleep 2-4 hourly day and night. After 4 weeks she will begin to sleep more at night. You can help synchronize her day-night rhythm by:

- Providing natural daylight during the day outside and inside the house
- Develop a flexible and predictable day and night routine
- Have a consistent bedtime routine
- Keep lights dim at night and use lights that have a yellow glow
- Avoid the use of blue lights at night such as smart phones, tablets, tvs, computers and game consoles
- Ensure daytime feeds are social times

Your baby's sleep – what's normal

- Your newborn baby spends about 16 hours in sleep each day (the range of "normal sleep" is 9 - 20 hours)
- This is spread in 5 - 6 episodes around the clock

- From newborn to 6 weeks your baby has regularly occurring periods of sleep of 2 - 4 hours
- At 6 weeks to 3 months your baby may be able to stay asleep for one 4 - 6 hours stretch, once a night
- At 3 - 6 months your baby may be able to stay asleep for one 5 - 6 hours stretch, once a night
- At 6 - 12 months your baby may be able to stay asleep for a 6 hour stretch, twice a night
- Your baby will have 2 - 3 day-time naps until 6 - 9 months (approximately 3 - 4 hours in total throughout the day)
- Your baby will wake at least 1 - 3 times a night during the first 12 months and will need your help to resettle – this is normal for all babies.

Bedtime routines

- A quiet, soothing bedtime routine helps your baby get a good sleep.
- The routine needs to be consistent, easy and familiar both day and night
- Depending on the age of your baby the routine should take no longer than 30 minutes (or shorter for young babies).
- Avoid stimulating activities prior to sleep
- Use a soft, low voice to read stories from real books and sing songs

- Give plenty of calm loving cuddles and a goodnight kiss.
- Soothing bath at the end of the day before the long night-time sleep
- Avoid the use of smart phones, tablets, tvs game consoles and fluorescent lights as these are very stimulating and prevent the onset of sleep
- Swaddling/wrapping helps to settle your baby
- Wrap your baby firmly but comfortably in a soft cotton wrap
- Make sure her arms are flexed against her chest in the wrap
- She might like her hands uncovered so she can put them to her mouth to soothe herself
- Leave room in the wrap so her legs are able to bend at the hips with knees apart
- Keep your baby's head uncovered
- Avoid over-dressing your baby
- Stop wrapping when your baby is starting to show signs of beginning to roll over

Ways to settle your baby

The following techniques are a guide to help you choose a way to settle your baby by her age of sleep development.

Soothing in Arms

1. Hold your baby in your arms until she falls asleep.

2. Use gentle rhythmic patting, rocking, stroking, talking, or softly singing before putting your baby into the cot asleep. These repetitions signal relaxation and sleep.
3. If your baby wakes after a sleep cycle you may need to re-settle using all the strategies listed above.

Hands-on Settling

1. Talk quietly and cuddle your baby to help calm and relax.
2. Put your drowsy baby on her back in the cot .
3. Comfort your baby with gentle 'ssshhh' sounds, gentle rhythmic patting, rocking, or stroking until baby is calm or nearly asleep.
4. If your baby starts to fuss loudly pick your baby up for a cuddle until calm or asleep before putting baby back in the cot.
5. Stay with your baby until he/she is nearly asleep.
6. If baby becomes unsettled and fussing return to the room.
7. Repeat comforting in the cot until asleep.
8. Your baby may need a few 'pick ups' to sooth enough to go back to their cot. Try to balance not over stimulating them with too many pick ups.
9. Leave the room when baby is asleep.

Comfort settling

Comfort settling provides reassurance and support while also providing an opportunity for babies to discover their own way of going to sleep.

Begin with Hands-on Settling steps 1-3

As your baby calms, move away from the cot or leave the room

1. If your baby starts to become distressed, immediately return and comfort your baby using step 3 before moving away or leaving the room again.
2. You may have to repeat this several times before your baby is able to settle to sleep.
3. If your baby still does not settle stay with your baby and use repetitious soothing and comforting strategies until calm. You can always pick your baby up to calm them enough to go back into their cot.
4. Leave the room when baby is calm or drowsy.
5. Some babies may need you to stay in the room until they fall asleep.

As your baby gains the ability to self-settle, it will take less time for you to settle your baby.

Parental Presence

You may prefer this option if your baby has never been separated from you at sleep time.

Begin with Hands-on Settling steps 1 - 3

1. Once your baby is calm and drowsy, lie down or sit beside the cot within sight of your baby and pretend to be asleep.
2. If your baby remains wakeful, give a little cough or quietly say 'ssshhh time to sleep' so your baby knows you are still in the room.
3. If your child becomes distressed use calm, repetitious strategies to soothe; try not to pick your baby up; then lie or sit beside the cot.
4. You may have to repeat this several times before your child is able to calm, relax to a drowsy state and fall asleep.
5. Stay in the room until your child is asleep during the day and sleep in the same room as your child during the night. Continue this for at least 1 week or until your child has 3 nights in a row of relatively uninterrupted sleep. You can now begin to leave the room before your child is asleep.

All babies take time to develop the ability to self-settle. With your help and patience you can sensitively support each stage of your baby's sleep development. If you and your baby are having some difficulties with sleep and settling it's best if you use the same settling techniques appropriate to your baby's ability every time you put your baby to bed. Remember change takes time. If you and your baby are having a difficult and exhausting time make sure you ask for help from family, friends, your child and family health nurse, or your local doctor.

NSW Health Safe Sleeping Guidelines

The recommendations:

- Sleep your baby on their back from birth, not on their tummy or side.
- Sleep your baby with head and face uncovered.
- Keep your baby smoke free before birth and after.
- Provide a safe sleeping environment night and day.
- Sleep your baby in their own safe sleeping place in the same room as an adult caregiver for the first six to twelve months.
- Do not let your baby sleep on the couch or armchair, especially with another person.
- Breastfeed your baby.
- Make sure anyone else caring for your baby understands the safe sleeping recommendations.

Book a visit to Tresillian:

Visit tresillian.org.au,
fill in the short online contact
form and one of our Nurses
will call you back.



Ask your local Health
Professional, Child & Family
Health Nurse, GP or early
parenting support service
to refer you and your child.



Tresillian Parent's Help Line

NSW/ACT FREECALL 1300 272 736

Tasmania FREECALL 1300 827 282



Proud Supporters
of Tresillian



4331 FEB 2026



The No Worries Wipe



Tested. Trusted. Loved



Acknowledgement of Country

Tresillian acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the First Peoples of Australia, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land in the countries on which we live and work in NSW, the ACT and TAS. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the communities we serve.



Tresillian®

It's in our nature to nurture