

Sleep



DID YOU KNOW

For the first month, your baby may sleep 18 of every 24 hours, but usually not for more than 3 or 4 hours at a time. Over time, she'll sleep for longer stretches at night.

Building Good Sleep Habits

You can help your baby sleep well by:

- setting aside enough nap time during the day so she's not overtired at night
- creating a night-time routine, such as a warm bath, rocking, singing and quiet time
- breastfeeding to lull her back to sleep at night

Falling Back to Sleep On Her Own

At about 6 months, your baby's sleep patterns will change. She'll start each night with a few hours of very deep sleep, followed by several hours of lighter sleep. During light sleep, she may partly wake many times. And she'll likely want you to breastfeed, rock or cuddle her back to sleep. But being able to soothe herself and fall asleep on her own is an important skill that will help both of you have more restful nights.



TRY THIS

During the day, have your baby sleep in a light room with normal daytime noises. At night, signal that it's time to sleep: keep the room dark and quiet.



HOW TO

Teach your 6-month-old to put herself back to sleep

- Breastfeed at the start of the bedtime routine, about 15 minutes before settling your baby.
- Sing to her before you put her into her bed.
- Make the room quiet and dark.
- Stroke her or hold her hand while she lies in her crib. Do this less and less as she learns to fall asleep on her own.
- Be consistent. Follow the same routine for naps and at night.



TRY THIS

Look to these for more information on creating a safer sleep environment for your baby:

Safer Sleep for my Baby – a resource available through HealthLink BC, or ask your health care provider.

Honouring our Babies – a resource that incorporates cultural beliefs, practices and issues specific to First Nations and Aboriginal communities. Visit fnha.ca for more information.

Safer Sleeping



DID YOU KNOW

The safest place for your baby to sleep is on her back, in her own crib or bassinet, in your room.

Sleep-related infant death can happen by accident (usually when a baby is smothered or suffocated) or by **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** (SIDS or “crib death”) – the unexplained death of a healthy baby while sleeping. Lessen the risks by:

- putting your baby down to sleep on her back on a firm surface in her own safe sleep space
- making your home smoke-free
- keeping your baby warm, but not hot
- breastfeeding
- keeping pillows, toys, heavy blankets and pets out of your baby's bed
- carefully considering the risks of bedsharing



DID YOU KNOW

Use stuffed toys for playtime, not sleep time. Putting them in the crib can block your baby's breathing.



BE AWARE

A car seat is not a safe place for your baby to sleep. She could suffocate if her body gets into the wrong position. If your baby falls asleep in the car, check on her regularly. Once you get to your destination, move her to a safe sleep space.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Always put your baby down to sleep on her back, and, if you find her sleeping on her tummy, turn her over onto her back again. Once she can roll easily from back to front and back again (usually at around 5 to 6 months), you no longer have to turn her over.



You can reduce the risk of overheating, suffocation and other dangers by keeping your baby's sleep area safe:

	What's Safest?	What's Risky?
Bed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Crib, cradle or bassinet that has been approved by Health Canada (ask your health care provider if you're unsure) ✓ Talk with your health care provider about other safe alternatives, too. Even a cardboard box, a drawer or a laundry basket can work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Drop-side crib (banned for sale since 2016) ✗ Co-sleeper crib that attaches to your bed ✗ Folding crib without double locks ✗ Damaged crib, or one made before 1986 ✗ Car seat ✗ Adult bed ✗ Couch or chair
Mattress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Firm mattress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Soft surface (couch, pillow-top mattress, air mattress, beanbag, waterbed) ✗ Torn mattress ✗ Mattress more than 15 cm (6 inches) thick (about the length of your hand) ✗ Gaps of more than 3 cm (1 1/8 inches, or about 2 finger widths) between mattress and crib frame
Bedding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Light blanket, blanket-weight sleeper, or sleep sack – without buttons or other parts that could come off and choke your baby. Make sure sleep sack's arm- and neck-holes aren't so large that your baby can slip down into it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Heavy blankets, quilts, duvets ✗ Pillows ✗ Bumper pads ✗ Sheepskins ✗ Plastic sheets ✗ Top sheet ✗ Toys
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sleeper and light blanket, or blanket-weight sleeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Heavy clothing ✗ Hats ✗ Swaddling
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Room sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Pets in bed with baby ✗ Sharing a bed with an adult or an older child

Room Sharing

What is room sharing?

Sleeping in the same room as your baby, but not in the same bed.

Is it recommended?

Yes – room sharing is recommended for the first 6 months.

Why?

It can calm your baby and reduce the risk of sleep-related infant death.

Bedsharing

What is bedsharing?

Sleeping in the same bed with your baby.

Is it recommended?

Bedsharing can be risky, especially for some babies.

Why not?

Sharing a bed with your baby – or even sleeping with her on a sofa or in a chair – puts her at risk of suffocation. She could get wedged against the mattress or between cushions, or you or your partner could roll on her and smother her. This risk increases if you're very tired or have been drinking alcohol or using drugs. Even co-sleeper cribs that attach to the side of your bed are dangerous, as your baby can get trapped between your mattress and the crib.



DID YOU KNOW

If you have more than one baby, it's safest to have them in their own sleep spaces. If they share the same crib, put them head to head, not side by side.



DANGER

Bedsharing is especially risky for some babies. Never share a bed if:

- your baby was born prematurely or weighed less than 2½ kg (5½ lb) at birth, or
- you or your partner:
 - smoke, or if you smoked while pregnant
 - have taken any substances that might make you sleep more heavily, like alcohol, medicine, cannabis or other drugs

Have another adult available to look after your baby if you're drinking alcohol or using any substances.

The safest place for your baby to sleep for the first 6 months is in her own safe sleep space in your room. But some families prefer to bedshare for cultural or personal reasons. And some find that they end up bedsharing, even if they hadn't planned to.

Talk with your health care provider about how to balance your family's wishes with the risks of bedsharing. And if you do choose to share a bed, do so as safely as possible. Ensure:

- Your baby is far away from pillows, blankets and duvets.
- Your baby is on her back.
- She isn't swaddled.
- The mattress is on the floor to reduce the risk of a fall.
- The mattress is firm (no waterbeds, air mattresses, pillowtops or feather beds).
- The baby is on the outside of the bed, not between adults.

- There's space around the bed so the baby can't get trapped between the mattress and the wall or a side table.
- The adults in the bed both know that the baby is in the bed and are comfortable with it.
- Any long hair is tied back so it can't get wrapped around baby's neck.
- No older children or pets are in the bed.

Swaddling

Is it recommended?

No. Most babies don't need to be swaddled to settle down, and it can be risky.

Why not?

Tight swaddling can make it hard for your baby to breathe and can lead to pneumonia. Or it can overheat her and increase the risk of SIDS. She can be smothered by the blanket or get stuck on her stomach and be unable to move into a safer position. Tightly wrapping your baby can also cause hip problems.

To keep your baby cosy, try using a sleep sack instead of swaddling with a blanket. But if you do choose to swaddle, reduce the risk by:

- putting your baby to sleep on her back
- only swaddling from the shoulders down – not over her face or head
- swaddling loose enough that you can fit 2 fingers between the blanket and baby's chest
- using a light cotton blanket
- checking that she's not hot or sweaty
- keeping the swaddle loose around her hips and making sure she can bend and move her legs
- no longer swaddling once she can make strong movements on her own (usually around 2 to 3 months)