

New Baby?

Some Ways to Cope with Sleep Deprivation



Being a new parent is hard work with very few breaks. One of the most difficult things can be the ongoing sleep deprivation.

Here are some tips to help you make it through this tiring stage of life.

- **Try to lay down when the baby sleeps.** This is difficult as there is always more laundry or housework to be done but try to *make your own rest a priority*. A nap in the day can make nighttime feeds much less stressful.
- **Take a day to stay in your pyjamas and rest.** Even if you are unable to sleep, lie down and read a book, watch TV or listen to music while your baby sleeps.
- **Try not to look at the clock at night.** It can make you more concerned about the sleep you are not getting; “How am I going to cope in the morning?” which means we focus on the negative. It will make you feel worse the following day.
- **Every baby is different** and will have different sleeping patterns. Young babies cannot be spoiled. When they wake up, feel reassured that you are doing the right thing by responding.
- **Breastfeed lying down.** Ask your partner to do the burping and changing for some of the feeds. If you choose to sleep with your baby, make sure you have reviewed co-bedding safety guidelines. See below.
- **Say yes to anyone who offers to help** you with household tasks, food prep or other chores. This is not the time to be a martyr.
- **Understand why babies wake up.** Babies tummies are small and need to be filled up often even at night! Your baby is not forming bad habits; they are growing with each passing night. Knowing this can make you more confident knowing you are doing the right thing.
- **Try to get outside every day.** Feeling sunshine on your face and getting fresh air can lift your mood, even if you are tired. It’s also great for catching some Vitamin D.

- **Keep your baby close to you.** Mom and baby sleep cycles often synchronize when breastfeeding at night. Having your baby sleep in the same room as you will help you respond quicker and help everyone get back to sleep sooner.
- **Limit caffeine.** Caffeine can interfere with sleep when you get the opportunity. It can also increase anxiety for some people. Remember that the way your body responded before you had a baby may have changed. Caffeine may have a different effect on you now!
- **Discuss with your partner** ways that you can both get more sleep. Can you take turns napping? Can your partner be with the baby until midnight while you go to bed to get a 2-3 hour stretch of uninterrupted sleep? Knowing that you are working together to maximize available sleep may make you both feel better.
- **Take care of yourself in other ways** so that your body is getting what it needs (even if sleep isn't one of them). Drink enough water. Eat healthy foods that give you energy and try to fit in some kind of physical activity.
- **Know that the sleep deprivation is temporary.** It may seem like it will last forever, but it is a phase of life that will eventually come to an end.
- **Remember that your baby waking up at night is a normal protective behaviour and your responsiveness is very important!**



For more resources on infant sleep check out some of these resources:

Sweet Sleep

Dr.