

Understanding Your Baby

Sleep

Babies are individuals and like us, their sleep patterns vary, as does the amount of sleep they need. However, on average babies need about 14 – 18 hours sleep a day in the first few weeks of life and by one year old this will have reduced to approximately 10 – 13 hours.

Help overcome sleep problems by trying to:

- Do lots of different activities during the day
- Keep to a daily routine of play times, daytime naps and outings
- Subdue the environment just before bedtime – e.g tone down the lights and TV, and avoid boisterous, noisy play
- Avoid having the light on during the night feed (which will help your baby to learn the difference between night and day.)
- Avoid lulling your baby to sleep by taking them for night rides in the car, as this will become 'normal'
- Fit in a daily massage!
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Understanding what your baby is saying to you

Every baby has an individual way of communicating their feelings; which they do through non-verbal cues. There is no 'recipe' of cues, but as a general rule, when your baby seems happy and keen to communicate, they will be displaying lots of positive cues. When they are not happy they will be using negative cues to indicate that they need something (such a feed, a cuddle, or just a bit of quiet time).

The positive cues are usually easier to spot, as a cheerful baby often wants to 'play' and 'chat' at this time. Subtle negative cues can be more difficult to recognise, but if ignored, your baby will try harder to be heard and, if this does not work, they will eventually start crying. Crying, though quite vocal, is still considered to be a 'non-verbal cue' that allows your baby to express their feelings. You can learn to understand what the different cries your baby uses, mean, but, sometimes, if the early negative cues are responded to, your baby may not need to cry at all.



How baby massage help

Many babies find massage very soothing, and may even fall asleep immediately afterwards.

Massage deepens and regulates the breathing, so babies may sleep more deeply and for longer if they receive a regular massage.

Baby massage may help parents feel more confident about what their baby is saying to them, as it gives parents the opportunity to think about whether they are saying 'yes' or 'no' to massage.