Typical sleep behaviour (3) – babies 6 to 12 months

Summary

- At this age, most babies sleep 10 to 14 hours in a 24-hour period. Their longest sleep period tends to be at night.
- Babies at 6 to 12 months are beginning to know the difference between night and day. They may need to wake up less often during the night because they do not need to be fed as often.
- By 6 to 12 months babies can become upset if you leave the room – they know you are the one who cares for them and keeps them safe.
- From 6 to 12 months, your baby may start to have two daytime naps for 1 to 2 hours – don’t worry if they aren’t as each baby is different and sleeping patterns can vary a lot.

Baby sleep patterns and behaviours (6 to 12 months)

From about the age of 6 months, your baby's sleep patterns gradually become more developed.

They begin to recognise the difference between day and night.

They wake up less often during the night because they do not need to be fed as often.

Most babies sleep 10 to 14 hours in a 24-hour period.

Every child is different, so don’t worry too much if your child has different sleep patterns to those described here. If you are concerned about your child, contact your local maternal and child nurse, your doctor or the Maternal and Child Health Line on Tel:13 22 29.

Sleep rhythms at 6 to 12 months

From 6 to 12 months, babies tend to sleep for the longest period at night.

They may start to nap only about twice a day for 1 to 2 hours.

All babies are different, and your baby may sleep more or less.

Separation and your baby at 6 to 12 months

From 6 to 12 months, babies can become upset if you leave the room. During this stage, they may become distressed when you leave, even if it is for a short period of time. This is because they associate you as the person that cares for them and keeps them safe. This is known as person permanence.

Your baby mostly wants to stay close to you at all times and may cry when they are separated from you. We sometimes call this separation anxiety.

This means it might take longer for babies to fall asleep.

Settling at 6 to 12 months

The number of times your 6 to 12-month-old baby wakes up during the night may temporarily increase.

You can help your baby settle by:

- recognising and responding to tired signs
- using positive and consistent bedtime routines
- parental presence – using your presence as a safety signal to reduce your baby’s anxiety by sleeping in their room
- camping out – by staying in their room until they fall asleep then leaving
- controlled comforting – also known as controlled crying and checking method which needs to be done correctly to be effective.

**There are a few different strategies you can use** to help your baby sleep and settle. By 6 months, you will begin to recognise their signs and cues.

Every baby and family is different, and it is up to you to decide which strategy you are comfortable with and works for you and your baby.

If you are worried about your baby’s sleep and settling, track your baby’s sleep for a week or so.

This can give you a clear idea of what might be going on.

If you are still concerned after you have tried different approaches for 1 to 2 weeks, talk to your family’s maternal and child health nurse, call the Maternal and Child Health Line or your doctor.

**Maternal and child health nurse visits are important**

Victorian parents have free access to the [Maternal and Child Health Service](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au), which is a great support after your baby is born.

Specially trained maternal and child health will work with your family to help you care for your child until they are ready to start school.

As part of this service, you will visit a maternal and child health nurse in your local area at 10 key ages and stages in your child’s development. These visits are important because they you an opportunity to identify and address any issues and concerns early in your child’s development.

Visits take place:

- following discharge from hospital (home visit)
- **two weeks**
- **four weeks**
- **eight weeks**
- **four months**
- **eight months**
- **one year**
- **18 months**
- **two years**
- **three and a half years**

Families can access the service at other times by telephone or through a centre visit.

**Don’t forget your ‘green book’**

Make sure you take your [My Health, Learning and Development – green book](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) with you each time you see your nurse, health professional or immunisation provider so you can jot down any issues, and record information on your baby’s growth and development.

If you don’t have a green book, let your nurse know.

**Where to get help**

- Your local maternal and child health service
- Your GP (doctor)
- Maternal and Child Health Line Tel: 13 22 29 – available 24 hours a day for the cost of a local call throughout Victoria
- Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Tel. 03 9419 3000
- Parentline Tel. 13 22 89

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