



# 5 Common Myths about baby's sleep

# I can clearly remember ...

... like most mothers I'm sure, the very moment I gave birth to my first child. I was absolutely buried in feelings of love and gratitude.

And then, about ten to fifteen seconds later, I was equally buried in advice, suggestions, and information. This was all thrown at me with the best intentions, but it was overwhelming nonetheless. I can't imagine the number of times I heard the words, "You should," "You'll want to," and "You've got to." If there's no such number as a "kajillion," it should be created specifically in order to measure the number of suggestions a new mother receives in her first year of motherhood.

Of course, those feelings of love and gratitude persist to this day, and so do the recommendations. And that's coming from an expert, a professional, in the child care field. I can only imagine the tidal waves of hints and advice that must overwhelm a mother who openly asks for it.

There's no such thing as a casual mom. This gig is full-time, no matter if you're a stay-at-home-mom, a working mom, or somewhere in between. Your kids are on your mind 24/7, no matter what else might be going on, so we tend to do a lot of research, and with access to unlimited data via the internet, Barnes & Noble, or your mother-in-law, (the latter having the most to say, by a mile) it's inevitable that we get some conflicting information. Although when it comes to kids, I think the discussion even eclipses politics for the sheer divisiveness and claiming opinion as fact.

So today, I want to focus on my area of expertise, that being sleep, and try to dispel some of the more popular myths I've seen in parenting forums, heard from Mom groups I've talked with, or had angrily shouted in all caps on my Facebook page.





## *Myth 1: Sleeping too much during the day will keep baby up at night*

Not likely, except in extreme cases. Unless your little one is sleeping practically all day and up all night, you probably don't need to concern yourself with the length of their naps. Newborns especially need a ton of sleep. In fact, up until about 6 months, I don't recommend that your little one be awake for more than about 2 - 2 1/2 hours at a time. For newborns, that number is more like 45 minutes to an hour.

What keeps babies awake at night, more than anything else, is overtiredness. You might think that an exhausted baby is more likely to sack out for a full night than one who slept all day, but it's actually just the opposite. The reason we refer to it as being "overtired" is because baby has missed the "tired" phase and their bodies start to kick back into gear, which keeps them from falling and staying asleep.

A baby who has gotten a decent amount of sleep during the day is far less likely to miss the sleep window. There are substantial variations depending on baby's age and the length of their naps, but up to that 6 month mark, it's really not uncommon for baby to be sleeping around 5 hours a day outside of nighttime sleep, so if your little one is still within those guidelines, let them snooze.

## *Myth 2: Sleeping is a natural development and can't be taught.*

Sleeping is natural, absolutely. Everybody wakes up and falls back to sleep multiple times a night, regardless of their age. So no, you can't teach a child to be sleepy. What can be taught, however, is the ability to fall back to sleep independently.

The typical "bad sleeper" of a baby isn't less in need of sleep, or more prone to waking up. They've just learned to depend on outside assistance to get back to sleep when they wake up. Once your little one has figured out how to get to sleep without assistance from outside sources, they start stringing those sleep cycles together absolutely effortlessly, and that's the secret to "sleeping through the night" as most parents understand it.

## *Myth 3: Babies will naturally dictate their own sleep schedule*

The idea that infant physiology is so flawlessly, naturally programmed to regulate a baby's schedule is, to be blunt, laughable. Nothing against Mother Nature, but she doesn't provide us with a ready-to-run baby like she does with say, the blue wildebeest. (Seriously? Walking six minutes after birth? Outrunning predators within a day? Our babies are cuter, but clearly not as prepared for battle straight out of the womb.)

Our babies need extensive care and help in their development, and their sleep cycles are unbelievably erratic if left unregulated. If they miss their natural sleep cycle by as little as a half hour, their cortisol production can increase which causes a surge in energy, and things quickly spiral out of control.

So as much as I wish babies could just fall asleep when they're tired, it simply doesn't work that way. That's not to say that you shouldn't respond to their cues, but you shouldn't rely exclusively on them either.

## *Myth 4: Sleep training is stressful for the baby and can affect the parent-child attachment.*

Nope. And this isn't just me talking here. This is the American Academy of Pediatrics. If there's a more reliable source of baby health information, they're astoundingly bad at marketing themselves. And according to a 2016 study conducted by eight of their top researchers, behavioral intervention, (A.K.A

Sleep training) "provide(s) significant sleep benefits above control, yet convey(s) no adverse stress responses or long-term effects on parent-child attachment or child emotions and behavior." Not a whole lot of gray area there.

## *Myth 5: Babies are not "designed" to sleep through the night.*

Putting aside our religious beliefs for a moment, I think we can all agree that, even if babies were "designed" somehow, whoever did the designing left plenty of room for some upgrades. Trusting your child's physiology to dictate their sleep schedule, their eating habits, their behavior, or just about any other aspect of their upbringing is a recipe for disaster.

Is your toddler designed to eat three pounds of gummi bears? Surely not. Will they if you don't intervene. Without a doubt. Is your baby designed to avoid predators? If so, nobody told my little ones, who would have happily hugged a hungry Siberian tiger if it approached them. (They might still, I don't know. It's never come up.)

Our little ones need our expertise and authority to guide them through their early years, and probably will for decades after that. This is especially true when it comes to their sleep. Some babies are naturally gifted sleepers, for sure, but don't rely on the advice of those who tell you that babies should dictate their schedules. You're in charge because you know best, even if it may not feel like it sometimes.



*There are obviously plenty more myths ...*

... and misconceptions surrounding babies and their sleep habits, but these are some of the most important to get the facts on.

Remember, there are endless posts on social media and websites that portray themselves as factual, but there's nothing stopping them from making that claim, regardless of their accuracy find peer-reviewed scientific study on all things baby-related, and trusted sources like the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Institutes of Health, Britain's National Health Service, Canada's Hospital for Sick Children, the World Health Organization, and other national children's health organizations are excellent sources of information you can feel confident about using to answer questions about your baby's health.

And if you want more information about the benefits of sleep, I'm willing to talk about it to the point of obnoxiousness.



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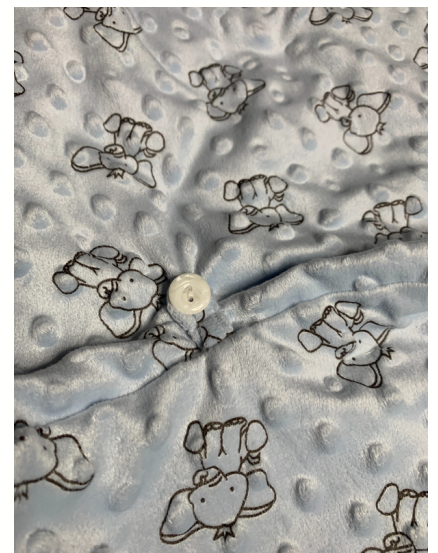
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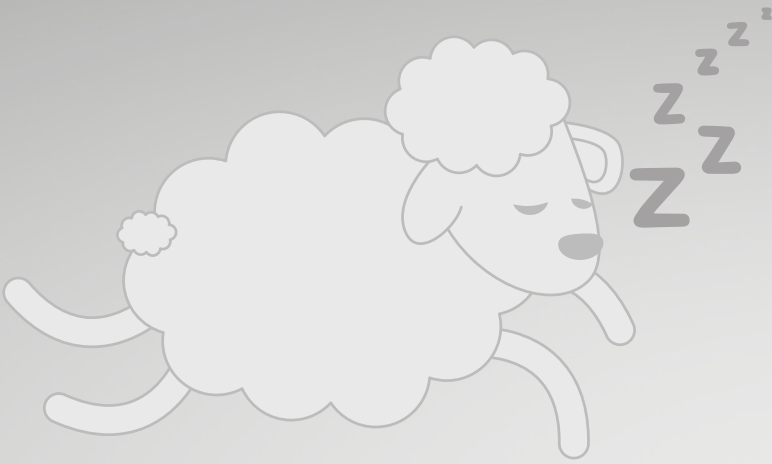
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## *Let's start our journey to better sleep!*

Creating a “sleep sanctuary” for your child is a great way to set the stage for a healthy night’s sleep, but -- if you’re the parent of a baby or toddler who isn’t sleeping through the night -- chances are that there’s a little more work to be done!

If your baby is waking during the night (and needing your help to get back to sleep), the good news is that solving this problem is actually pretty simple!

It all has to do with following a few specific steps at bedtime that give your child the skills they need to fall asleep independently... without your help!

Then, your little one can easily use these skills to put themselves back to sleep when they wake during the night.

I’ve created a complete “how-to” resource on how to do all this. It’s called The Sleep Sense™ Program, and it’s been used by over 57,000 parents like you to solve the exact same challenges you’re having with your child.

Contact me today to start your sleep program for a better night rest.

Sleep well,

Marijke Coetser