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# General information:

There is no right or wrong way of caring for a baby, however there are hard and easy ways to choose from.

In dealing with babies and toddlers it does take time, acceptance, consistency and tact (TACT).

Babies and toddlers need two nutrients to survive. We all talk about food, however sleep is also a nutrient. Food and sleep go hand in hand – without food they won’t sleep well and without sleep they won’t eat well.

When implementing new changes with babies and toddlers I always work on a ten-day time frame. Remember to give it ten days unless I mention otherwise.

What is important is that you must work within your limits and not those of others. This is your time to parent and to parent you must make mistakes – we only learn by making mistakes. Try not to parent on how other people tell you to parent as most can’t truly remember and tend to think they all had perfect babies.

# SLEEPING AND SETTLING

## Sleeping routines

Sleeping is a learned behavior. We need to guide a baby and teach it how to sleep. So, how do you teach Your baby to sleep? I believe that the best way is to put him into his bed wide awake and after that initial attempt of getting him to sleep, only then by picking him up and holding him until he eventually goes to sleep. It’s best to position yourself so you can remain still whilst doing this and use your body as a ‘bed’. Remember your body represents Your baby’s cot and if the cot doesn’t move then neither should you. Movement is counterproductive as it can lead to waking when Your baby is transferred to his cot. Your baby is not looking for movement i.e. rocking in a stroller, driving or walking around holding him up. He is looking for warmth and familiarity. Movement is a quick fix and a difficult fix to change as Your baby gets older and harder to hold or when he grows out of the pram or hammock.

So how do you get Your baby to sleep well? As with establishing feeding, it takes TIME, ACCEPTANCE, CONSISTENCY and TRANQUILITY (TACT).

For me, I believe the most important skill that parents can teach babies is that of self-settling. It will teach Your baby how to gain control over his emotional state and this in turn will lead to him developing his emotional backbone as he grows.

Babies when going to bed do cry – it’s their way of de stressing. Adults read books, watch TV, mediate or talk to each other – babies cant do this so their only way of communication is crying. So, it is healthy to have a cry before going to sleep – but obviously this does depend on the type of cry and length.

It is Your baby’s way of having his “quiet” time or “de stressing” or “unwinding” before finding his sleep.

As parents if we only teach or give our children one gift, the art of self-settling is the most important.

Babies need two nutrients to survive: the first is food; the second is sleep. Without sleep they don’t feed well and without food they don’t sleep well.

### Props

If you use props you will find as Your baby grows they will interfere with him finding his sleep. Also if you travel then you must be prepared to use these props wherever and whenever he goes to bed. You can’t just say *‘Oh today we won’t use them and tomorrow we will’*. Babies do not need props to sleep under 11 weeks the only prop they need is your arms.

## How to Settle Your Baby

Many mothers find settling in arms easier than cot settling and enjoy the intimacy.

In some households, however, cot settling is more practical.

Whichever you choose, it is important when Your baby cries that you respond immediately. At this young age, do not let Your baby cry himself to sleep. It is too distressing for a young baby.

If you choose to settle in the cot, ideally start no earlier than six weeks and at the latest 12 weeks. For babies older than 12 weeks, it can become a more difficult process for both mother and baby.

If beginning at six weeks, Your baby should not be left to cry unattended for longer than five minutes at a time.

It is likely that many hours will be spent holding Your baby. Once Your baby learns how to settle and resettle he will eventually be able to sleep anywhere.

Wherever Your baby sleeps the process is the same.

### How to do it well

Place Your baby in his cot while he is still awake. It is important he familiarises himself with what will become his primary sleeping place.

Leave the room.

Dump and run, don’t hover like a helicopter.

When Your baby cries, respond immediately by going in to the room.

You then have choices:

### Settling in Arms

1. Respond by picking Your baby up from his cot.

“Sit out the storm” by sitting down in a quiet place.

Remain calm and still allowing your body and mind to nurture him.

Think of it as your body being his bed. Hold Your baby in the “Engulf hold”. No rocking, talking or eye contact.

Allow Your baby to cry for as long as you feel comfortable with. The following times are guidelines only as much will depend on how your baby responds and your choices.

**Newborn 0-6 weeks**

0-2 minutes crying

**Newborn 6-12 weeks**

0-5 minutes crying

Some babies cry, then settle themselves and fall asleep.

If Your baby continues to cry, you will need to help him settle into his sleep cycle. His cry could be on and off like a car engine or may escalate for a few minutes then taper off. Remember it is just his way of de-stressing and winding down.

Intervene with cupping and shushing, and if necessary offer a dummy. As Your baby drifts off to sleep, replace cupping with patting, until they are asleep.

Lighten the patting until you eventually withdraw your hand, continuing with the patting motion as if patting the air.

If he stirs, intervene with patting again until he returns to sleep. It is possible during this light sleep phase that he will vary between sleep and stirring.

You may choose to let Your baby sleep the entire nap in your arms. Alternatively you may transfer him to his cot once he has progressed from light to deep sleep.

1. “Allowing your baby to sleep in your arms is not a cop out. On the contrary, it instills a sense of security that makes them feel nurtured and ready for sleep”.

Life isn’t 100% consistent and as long as you are aiming for 80% consistency that’s okay you just don’t want it less than 80% until the routine that you have set is established. Once this is the case, it’s okay to have less of a consistency but then again pull back up again to the 80% if things start going wrong.

## Routine (Rhythm) – up to 12 weeks

Your baby’s current rhythm is an awake-time of approximately 45 minutes to a maximum of 1-½ hours. By the time he is 12 weeks old he will be awake for approximately 1½ hours and then by 6 months approximately 2 hours, maybe longer. Some 6-month-old babies can stretch out to 2½ to 3 hours – this all depends on the individual baby and also how feeding is going.

Currently, Your baby’s naptime is approximately 1½ hours but can be longer. It is Your baby’s sleep rhythm that indicates how often he feeds because once he is awake then it is feed time. As a baby grows they can learn to wait for food; however, a baby under 12 weeks needs food within a few minutes of waking. Babies feed better once they have had a good sleep i.e. awake for 1¼ hours, napping for 1½ hours = feeding every 2¾ hours.

## Swaddling

This is Your baby’s first sleep cue. Although he may not be too keen on some of the swaddling techniques you have tried, you may find that he will love the ‘snow angel’ swaddle (please see later notes or refer to the video on my website). This works for the majority of babies who find the other ways of swaddling uncomfortable.

Otherwise, if not swaddling, then I would recommend you use a sleeping bag as their first sleep cue.

## Self-Settling Tools

* The ‘Engulf’ Hold
* Cupping and patting
* Shushing

### The ‘Engulf’ Hold

As its name suggests, this hold provides as much body contact as possible, giving Your baby the sense of being completely contained, as if in the womb.

It positions Your baby in such a way that you can initiate other settling techniques simultaneously. In addition, it provides warmth, intimacy and the meditative beat of your heart.

Most mothers/fathers prefer using their dominant arm to support the baby’s body from underneath. Choose whichever side feels most natural to you.

Hold Your baby so that his head is resting on the upper region of your non-dominant arm. For mothers, this ensures that their baby is not too close to their breast where the baby could be easily distracted by being close to their milk supply.

Draw Your baby in close so that you are pressed tummy to tummy with his face nestled just below the top of your shoulder. Your palm will be on his bottom with his legs tucked up into your body and supported by your forearm.

With your non-dominant arm, reach around Your baby’s shoulder and take hold of his arm to steady it, in other words to control the startle movement.

For this technique to be effective, there should be no eye contact or communication between you and Your baby. Allow your own body to do the nurturing.

### Cupping and Patting

Cupping is a stronger action and is done with a cupped palm, incorporating both cupping and a short but gentle thrust forward of Your baby’s body.

Patting or cupping his bottom or lower body mimics your heartbeat and reassures Your baby of your presence.

Patting is a rhythmic, firm and repetitive action done with your palm flat.

Both patting and cupping can be done in your arms or adapted for the cot.

### Shushing

Shushing is a long, low sound, resembling air being released from a tyre. It should be loud enough so that Your baby can hear it over his crying. It is thought that babies respond to shushing because it is similar to the sound in the womb.

### Dummies (optional)

If you allow Your baby to wind down before offering a dummy, it becomes a settling tool rather than a prop.

### **Props**

Babies do not need to be rocked or walked around the block to encourage them to sleep. While movement may seem an obvious method to help soothe a baby to sleep, it becomes the hardest habit to break and interferes with self-settling. It is an unnecessarily labour-intensive approach that often delivers little reward.

Instead, imagine that your body takes the place of the cot in which Your baby will eventually sleep independently; it makes sense that you remain stationary when settling him.

All props, including music, white noise, movement that cannot be done in a cot, dummies (when given straight away to a baby) create bad habits and interfere with a baby’s ability to learn self-settling.

1. “Allowing your baby to sleep in your arms is not a cop out. On the contrary, it instills a sense of security that makes them feel nurtured and ready for sleep”.

## Sleep, Settling and Resettling in the First Twelve Weeks

Much of Your baby’s first 3 months is spent establishing feeding and sleeping rhythms. His digestive system is still maturing and his sleep patterns are still evolving.

In the first 12 weeks your aim is to teach Your baby, in a nurturing way, how to settle and find sleep unaided and how to stay asleep.

How Your baby’s sleep patterns evolve in the first 12 weeks will much depend on you and your household. Keep in mind that daytime rhythms will affect the night rhythms.

This routine is repeated throughout the day and night. With time, the amount of assistance with settling should decrease and eventually Your baby will learn how to self-settle. Once Your baby learns how to settle and resettle, he will eventually be able to sleep anywhere.

You can’t spoil Your baby at this age; he need lots of nurturing and reassurance.

Teaching good sleep habits requires TIME, ACCEPTANCE, CONSISTENCY and TRANQUILITY (TACT).

## Self-Settling

I believe one of the most important skills that parents can teach babies is that of self-settling. It teaches babies how to gain control over their emotional state and this in turn leads to them developing their emotional backbone as they grow. It does not happen overnight and needs to be taught in a nurturing way.

When you go to bed you read a book, meditate, watch TV, or chat with your partner – a baby can only do one thing and that is cry. There is nothing unhealthy about a baby crying before going to sleep. As a parent, it can be difficult to listen to but as long as Your baby is happy and contented generally, crying is just part of life. Remember you are not leaving him there to cry it out; you are leaving him there to give him the ability to find his own sleep. You will not get anywhere by leaving him to cry for hours. You will succeed quicker by giving him space and then helping him to find his sleep.

Self-settling is the key to establishing healthy sleep patterns. It gently teaches babies how to find sleep naturally, without the use of sleep aids, props or interference.

It is that small window that occurs when Your baby starts crying until the moment you intervene to help him find his sleep. This window initially may be for only a minute or two but as he grows it increases until eventually he will be able to find sleep independently. It is a crucial step in Your baby’s sleep development.

Self-settling does NOT involve leaving Your baby to cry it out alone to finally fall asleep due to stress and exhaustion.

## Resettling

This is how to get Your baby to sleep and to enable him to stay asleep.

Resettling teaches Your baby how to progress from light to heavy sleep. This is essential to avoid the pitfalls of frequent waking and catnapping. In a sense, resettling is the second stage of teaching him how to find sleep and does demand more time and patience than settling (TACT).

Most babies stir or wake when progressing from light to heavy sleep and this occurs anywhere between 20-45 minutes. In the beginning the idea is not to let Your baby wake fully during this transition; a sleepy baby is easier to resettle than a wide-awake, crying baby.

However, as he grows you will need to step back and allow Your baby the ability to try and resettle without any intervention. When you do this you will use your settling cycles.

Generally a baby who does not learn how to resettle will have short sleep cycles and wake during the night without the ability to fall back asleep on his own. The aim of resettling is to ensure Your baby sleeps for not less than 1½ hours per sleep rhythm.

## Resettling and Feeding

Many mothers opt for feeding as a way to resettle their baby. This is an example of what appears to be the easy way initially becoming the more difficult option later on, as the result is a sleep-deprived baby who is more problematic to settle. More often than not the baby is not hungry but is instead seeking comfort through sucking. He is feeding for comfort, not hunger. So instead of feeding, try offering a dummy or finger.

## Settling in Arms or Cot Settling?

Many mothers find settling in arms easier than cot settling and enjoy the contact and intimacy. I tend to refer to this as ‘attachment parenting’ or ‘4th trimester’. For some households cot settling is more practical.

Whether you choose to settle Your baby in your arms or in the cot, it is vital that he begins his sleep cycle by being placed in his cot while still awake. This gives him the opportunity to familiarize himself with what will soon become his primary sleeping place.

In the first 12 weeks, whichever you choose, it is important that when Your baby cries you respond immediately. At this young age, do not let him cry himself to sleep alone. It is not healthy for a young baby.

* Place Your baby in his cot while still awake.
* Leave the room – dump and run, and don't hover like a helicopter.
* When Your baby cries, respond immediately by going in to his room (this may be immediately or can take up to a minute)

You then have the following options based upon whether you choose to settle Your baby in your arms or in a cot:

### Settling in Arms

Pick Your baby up and remain calm while still allowing your body and mind to nurture him. Think of this as your body being his bed.

Sit down in a quiet place and ‘ride the storm’.

Initially, hold Your baby in the Engulf Hold. There should be no rocking, cupping/patting, shushing, talking or eye contact.

The following times are guidelines it will depend on how Your baby responds and your choices. Allow him to cry in your arms from 2 to 5 minutes; sometimes you may need to do it for longer.

Your baby’s cry may escalate for a few minutes then taper off or could stop and start like a car engine. Remember it is just his way of de-stressing and winding down.

Your baby may cry, then settle himself and fall asleep. If Your baby continues to cry then intervene with cupping and shushing, and if necessary offer a dummy. If Your baby continues to cry then stop the cupping and shushing and allow him to cry for up to 5 minutes and then intervene with the cupping and shushing. You should repeat this until you can actually calm him down and help him find his sleep.

The time frames given are only guidelines and in the beginning you will probably not do more than a minute – but over time you will increase the time frame as Your baby grows.

As Your baby drifts off to sleep, replace the cupping and shushing with patting until he is asleep. Remember this is his ‘light’ sleep.

### Resettling in arms

If Your baby stirs, start cupping and shushing until he returns to sleep. It is possible that during the light sleep phase that Your baby will alternate between sleep and stirring before eventually moving to a deep sleep cycle. Once asleep, switch to gentle patting and shushing. By now an hour may have passed.

You may choose to let Your baby sleep the entire nap in your arms. Alternatively you may transfer him to his cot once he has progressed from light to deep sleep. This takes approximately 1-¼ hours of holding Your baby.

If you choose to transfer Your baby to his cot at this stage then continue to pat his bottom during the transition. Once Your baby is in the cot then place your other hand firmly on his chest, providing as much connection as possible. This is what I call “engulfing in the cot”.

Slowly remove your hand from Your baby’s chest and reduce your patting to the point that you eventually withdraw your hand to end up patting the air, then leave the room.

If Your baby wakes, repeat the process and stay with him until he returns to sleep.

### Settling Your Your baby in the Cot

Allow Your baby to cry from 1 to 5 minutes depending on what you choose to do before intervening. Pick him up and burp him.

Return Your baby to his cot and place your hand firmly on his chest. With your other hand start cupping and shushing. This is reassuring for him and establishes as much contact as possible without having to hold him. This is called engulfing in the cot. At this stage you can offer him a dummy as well.

Continue cupping and shushing until Your baby falls asleep then gently roll him onto his back, continuing to pat with your hand on his chest.

Once you sense that Your baby is asleep, remove your hand from his chest and lighten the patting until eventually you can withdraw your hand, continuing to pat, as if patting the air.

If Your baby stays asleep, leave the room promptly and quietly.

If, as you exit, Your baby stirs or you hear him crying once you have left the room, return and repeat the process.

If Your baby does not settle, you may choose to pick him up and settle in your arms (see above).

### Resettling in the cot

In the beginning it is important to respond immediately when Your baby begins to stir as it is easier to resettle him before he wakes too much. Eventually you will need to step back and allow him the ability to do this on his own.

Respond by cupping and shushing until Your baby falls asleep again, continuing to pat on his chest with your hand. Offer him a dummy as well.

Once you sense that Your baby is asleep, remove your hand from his chest and lighten the patting until eventually you can withdraw your hand, continuing to pat, as if patting the air.

If Your baby stays asleep, leave the room promptly and quietly.

If, as you exit, Your baby stirs or you hear him crying once you have left the room, return and repeat the process.

If Your baby does not settle, you may choose to pick him up and settle him in your arms (see above).

### Mixing It Up

Some mothers find it easier to practice cot sleeping in the mornings when they have more energy and opt for settling their babies in their arms in the afternoon.

## Settling Cycle for babies under 12 weeks in a cot

**First Stage**

* Cry 0 up to 5 minutes
* Comfort – cupping and shushing and patting and shushing. Offer a dummy and stay with Your baby until he goes to sleep

**Next Stage**

* Cry 0 to 5 minutes
* Comfort – cupping and shushing and patting and shushing. This is to reassure and not to put Your baby to sleep.

Then

* Cry 1 to 5 minutes
* Comfort – cupping and shushing and patting and shushing. Offer a dummy and stay with Your baby until he goes to sleep.

### Getting Up

When you go to pick Your baby up from his cot whether it is after a nap or in the mornings, open up the room before picking him up. This encourages Your baby to play or lie in his cot; he will also learn that when you walk into the room you are not going to pick him up straight away. I always chat to my babies when I go in, while opening up the room. I also use this time to put away clothes etc.

This is a way of teaching Your baby how to feel secure in his own space and your presence and soothing voice signals to him that he is safe without you having to scoop him up in your arms.

## Settling Your baby after 12 weeks

Twelve weeks marks the end of the 4th trimester and is an ideal time for most babies to begin spending the majority of their sleeping hours in a cot.

This is often their first major step in recognising themselves as individuals who are separate from their mothers. It is especially important that this transition is carried out with consistency, tenderness and patience. This step I refer to as nurturing within boundaries.

# PLEASE NOTE:

The suggested routine above is only intended as a guide and should be used as such. Remember YOU are Your baby’s mum and so listen to your heart and instinct. Yes, we don’t all do it by the book, or get it right the first time, so remember that you need to make ‘mistakes’ to get it right for you. It’s a time of discovering Your baby’s personality and figuring out what works for him, you and your home life.